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GENERAL FOOD SAFETY GUIDELINES

Most sporting environments are *not* optimal for fueling athletes; the reality is many snack locations and pre-game meals are in locker rooms, field houses, and more. To help prevent foodborne illness and keep athletes safe, follow these general food safety guidelines.

The saying goes, “Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot,” in order to keep them safe. This can be a challenge, especially with outdoor sports.

Cold Foods:

- Refrigerated foods should remain at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Ideally, keep cold foods in the refrigerator as long as possible. If using coolers, make sure there is plenty of ice or ice packs to keep all foods cold. If coolers are outside, try to place them in a shaded area.
- Almost all animal-source foods should be kept refrigerated with the exception of jerky. This includes all dairy, eggs, and foods made with these ingredients, as well as those made with mayonnaise or creamy salad dressings.
- If cold foods have been left in the heat or at room temperature for 4 hours or more, they should be discarded.

Hot Foods:

- Hot foods should be kept heated in warmers or chafing dishes with a heat source. This will help ensure foods stay at the correct temperature.
- Heat from a hot day does not work for keeping hot foods hot. In fact, foods left in the heat are a likely set-up for foodborne illness.
- Like their cold counterparts, almost all hot animal-source foods should be kept warm. Warm entrees and side items made with dairy, egg, mayonnaise, or creamy ingredients should be kept warm.
- If hot foods have been left sitting out for 4 hours or more, they should be discarded.

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Meal Set-up/Food Packaging

- Depending on the eating environment, providing pre-packaged or self-contained meals can help limit exposure to germs and cross-contamination.
- If serving meals family-style, be sure each dish has its own utensils so cross-contamination is limited. In addition, if one person serves the food item, to prevent every athlete from touching the utensil, it is likely that germ transfer will be reduced.
- Pre-packaged or self-contained snacks should be offered as often as possible since many times when athletes are grabbing snacks, it is impossible to double check that everyone washed their hands. Purchasing individual snack-size snack foods or pre-portioning snacks into baggies for locker rooms, dugouts, or other locations is ideal.
- Providing athletes with utensil packets should be a top priority so athletes are not touching other athletes' utensils.
- It is ideal to provide condiments in individual packets that an athlete can pick up, or in larger squirt bottles. Avoid having bowls of condiments out with knives and spoons.



Cleanliness

- Be sure each dish and condiment has its own serving utensil to limit the opportunity for foodborne illness.
- Try to set up meals in an area where there is a handwashing station for athletes to wash their hands with soap and water before each eating occasion. If no handwashing station is available, provide hand sanitizer and disinfectant hand wipes for use. These should be located near the serving line.
- Anyone serving food should wear gloves and ideally a hair net.
- Wipe down and/or disinfect the food serving areas as often as possible.

Cooking Equipment

- Many buffets include waffle makers, panini presses, blenders, and more. Not only is there a risk that an athlete could injure or burn themselves, there is also the risk of cross-contamination between raw and cooked ingredients. Care should be taken if these appliances are available; an attendant can be helpful to ensure food safety protocols are followed.
- If team BBQs or picnics are held, it is very important to keep raw and cooked foods separate, with different pans and utensils, to prevent cross-contamination.

