



Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Central Luzon Center for Health Development



09 March 2026

ADVISORY

**TO : PROVINCIAL/CITY/MUNICIPAL HEALTH OFFICES
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Director IV

SUBJECT : Beat the Heat, Keep Food Safe: DOH Tips to Prevent Foodborne Diseases

Republic of the Philippines DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Schools Division Office of Bulacan	
ADVISORY	
To:	No. <u>030</u> , S. <u>2026</u>
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In the Philippines, the **summer or dry season** is often associated with an increase in foodborne illnesses such as Cholera, Typhoid Fever, and Hepatitis A. The Department of Health explains that higher temperatures during this period can accelerate food spoilage and promote the rapid growth of harmful microorganisms. Warm conditions also encourage the proliferation of pests such as flies, which can carry and transmit bacteria that contaminate food and water.

To protect public health, the Department of Health strongly promotes adherence to the **“Five Keys to Safer Food,”** a food safety framework adapted from the World Health Organization. This approach serves as a primary preventive strategy against food contamination and food poisoning, emphasizing proper hygiene, safe food handling, and the use of clean water and ingredients.

1. Keep Clean

Bacteria can be spread through hands and kitchen tools. During summer, the DOH emphasizes:

- **Handwashing:** Wash hands for at least 20 seconds before handling food and after using the toilet.
- **Sanitize Surfaces:** Regularly clean and sanitize all surfaces and equipment used for food preparation.
- **Pest Control:** Protect kitchen areas from insects (especially flies, which swarm in the heat) and other animals.

2. Separate Raw and Cooked

Cross-contamination is a major cause of food poisoning.

- **Segregation:** Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods.
- **Dedicated Tools:** Use separate knives and cutting boards for raw items to avoid transferring bacteria.



- **Storage:** Store food in covered containers to prevent contact between raw and prepared meals.

3. Cook Thoroughly

Proper cooking kills the harmful microorganisms that thrive in warm weather.

- **Core Temperature:** Ensure food especially meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood reaches at least 70°C.
- **Visual Check:** For meat and poultry, ensure juices run clear rather than pink.
- **Reheating:** If consuming leftovers, reheat them thoroughly at least 75°C.

4. Keep Food at Safe Temperatures

This is the **most critical mandate** during the Philippine summer.

- **The 2-Hour Rule:** Never leave cooked food at room temperature for more than **2 hours**. In extreme heat (above 32°C), this limit drops to **1 hour**.
- **Refrigeration:** Promptly refrigerate all cooked and perishable food (ideally below 5°C).
- **Avoid Thawing on Counters:** Do not thaw frozen food at room temperature; use the refrigerator or microwave instead.

5. Use Safe Water and Raw Materials

Contaminated water is a primary source of summer-related diarrhea.

- **Water Safety:** Use only purified or boiled water for drinking and food preparation.
- **Freshness:** Select fresh and wholesome food.
- **Wash Produce:** Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables, especially those eaten raw.

As temperatures rise, so does the risk of food contamination and foodborne diseases. The Department of Health reminds the public that preventing illness begins with simple but consistent food safety practices at home, in food establishments, and within communities. By following the **Five Keys to Safer Food**, the DOH encourages families to remain vigilant in food preparation and storage, stay properly hydrated by drinking safe and potable water, and seek immediate medical attention if symptoms such as severe diarrhea, vomiting, fever, or dehydration occur.

Beat the heat by keeping food safe because protecting your health starts with the food on your table.