

Talk to Your Patients about Food Safety

Accessible link: <https://www.cdc.gov/climate-health/index.html>

Precipitation, floods, heat events, drought, hail, and wildfires are expected to become more frequent and severe due to climate change.¹ These events will not only directly negatively impact human health and well-being, but also property and infrastructure. Subsequently, food safety can be compromised, and the risk of foodborne illness can rise, particularly as a result of a power outage.³¹ Review this information and share with your patients.

Takeaways for Healthcare Providers, Hospitals, and Clinics

- Discuss safe food handling practices, especially with patients at risk of illness.³² Follow these recommended practices from the FDA:^{33, 34}
 - » **Clean:** Wash hands and surfaces often
 - » **Separate:** Separate raw meats from other foods
 - » **Cook:** Cook to the right temperature
 - » **Chill:** Refrigerate foods promptly
- Tell patients about the symptoms of food-borne illness: high fever, blood in stool, prolonged vomiting, signs of dehydration, and diarrheal illness that last more than 3 days.^{34, 35, 36}
- Providers should consider engaging in the FDA's Foodborne Illness Continuing Medical Education Program to learn how to treat and educate patients.³⁴

Advice for Your Patients

1. Educate patients on safe food preparation.^{33, 34}
2. Tell patients to prepare for emergencies in advance.¹⁰ Suggest patients prepare an emergency 3-day food supply of non-perishable items for each person and pet in their home if extreme weather is forecasted.³¹
3. Advise patients to keep their refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature, particularly during a power outage.^{31, 37}
4. Patients should throw away all perishable foods (including meat, poultry, fish, eggs, and leftovers) in their refrigerator when the power has been off for 4 hours or more.³¹ Food from the freezer can be safely refrozen or cooked if it still contains ice crystals and feels as cold as if refrigerated.³¹



Populations at Greater Risk¹

- Infants and children
- Adults over 65 years old
- People who live or work near water hazards
- People with limited access to resources or infrastructure
- People experiencing homelessness
- Rural populations
- People with lower incomes
- People living in mobile homes



Climate Change Medical Factsheets Footnotes

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