



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 23, 2003

Contact: Bill Parizek  
850-245-4111

**FLORIDA'S HEALTH SECRETARY ISSUES FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR SUMMER SEASON**

Tallahassee – Florida Department of Health (DOH) Secretary John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., reminds Florida's residents and visitors to make food safety a top priority during the summer picnic and barbecue season.

People can practice safe food handling and prevent foodborne illness by following six simple steps:

1. **Wash, wash, wash your hands** – Always wash your hands with hot, soapy water before and after handling food.
2. **Marinating mandate** – When marinating for long periods of time, it is important to keep the marinating foods refrigerated. Don't use sauce that was used to marinate raw meat or poultry on other already cooked food. Boil used marinade sauce before applying to cooked food.
3. **Hot, hot, hot** – When grilling foods, preheat the coals on your grill for 20 – 30 minutes, or until the coals are lightly coated with ash.
4. **Temperature gauge** – Use a meat thermometer to insure that food reaches a safe internal temperature.
  - a. Hamburgers and ground poultry should be cooked to 160° F.
  - b. Poultry parts: 170° F.
  - c. Roasts, steaks and other large cuts of beef: 145° F. (rare) and 160° F. (medium)
  - d. Fish – should be cooked until the meat is opaque and flakes easily.
5. **Stay away from that same old plate** – When taking foods off the grill, do not put cooked food items back on the same plate that previously held raw food.
6. **Coolers and refrigeration** – A full cooler will maintain its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled, so it is important to pack plenty of extra ice or freezer packs to insure a constant cold temperature.

For more information on proper food handling, please visit the DOH website at [www.doh.state.fl.us](http://www.doh.state.fl.us) and choose "Food Hygiene" from the subject list. Additional information can also be obtained from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service website at [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)

###