Holiday Edition 2023

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
BUREAU OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

Travelers (pa.gov)

The Safe Traveler Bulletin

Health information to guide Pennsylvania travelers on how to prevent illness for themselves and communities while traveling.

COVID-19 Tests

Test Yourself From Home If:

- You have COVID-19 symptoms like a sore throat, runny nose, cough, or loss of taste or smell.
- It has been at least 5 days since you came into close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- You are gathering with a group, especially with people at risk of serious sickness.

COVID-19 Test Kit Expired?

Visit: At-Home OTC COVID-19 Diagnostic Tests | FDA for the list of test kits near the bottom of the webpage.

1. Find your test's name, manufacturer, expiration date, and lot number (found next to the word LOT).

Be sure the manufacturer and test name match your test kit as some manufacturers make more than one test.

2. If your expiration date has been extended, you will see a link that says "Extended Expiration Date." Click the link and find the test kit's lot number and new expiration date. If your lot number is not listed, use the expiration date printed on the box.

Or, call the phone number on the box to ask if it has expired.

Spread Holiday Cheer as You Travel, Not Measles!

Measles is a virus that spreads very easily. Unvaccinated people can get sick when they breathe in droplets from a cough or sneeze of a person with the virus; or if they touch a surface that the virus lands on, then touch their eyes, noses, or mouth.

Measles infections imported from other countries can be spread locally, explains experts from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Dr. Arlene Seid, and Andrew Noble. In 2000, the United States declared that measles was eliminated from this country. However, measles is still spread in other countries and can lead to death, especially in young children.

Unvaccinated travelers have a higher risk of getting sick and spreading measles. Plan for your next trip outside of the U.S. by searching the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention travel listings for international vaccine recommendations.

It takes time for vaccines to work. After receiving your first dose of MMR vaccine, wait at least 28 days before receiving the second dose. You are fully vaccinated 2 to 3 weeks after the second dose.

There is no treatment if you get sick. A two-dose series of the Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR) vaccine is your best protection from getting sick and passing the virus to others.

Find out if you should get the vaccine at Measles-Mumps-Rubella-Varicella (MMRV) Vaccine Information Statement | CDC.

People sick with the measles may have a:

- high fever (up to 104◦ F)
- cough
- pink itchy eyes
- runny nose
- rash that starts on the head and moves down the body

Measles infections can cause other serious problems like:

- diarrhea
- pneumonia
- seizures and brain swelling

COMPARE

Before the National Measles Vaccination Program started in 1963:

An estimated 3 to 4 million people got sick with measles every year in the United States. Of these reported annual cases, 500,000 were reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Among reported cases: ❑ 48,000 were hospitalized ❑ 1,000 developed brain swelling ❑ 400 to 500 died.

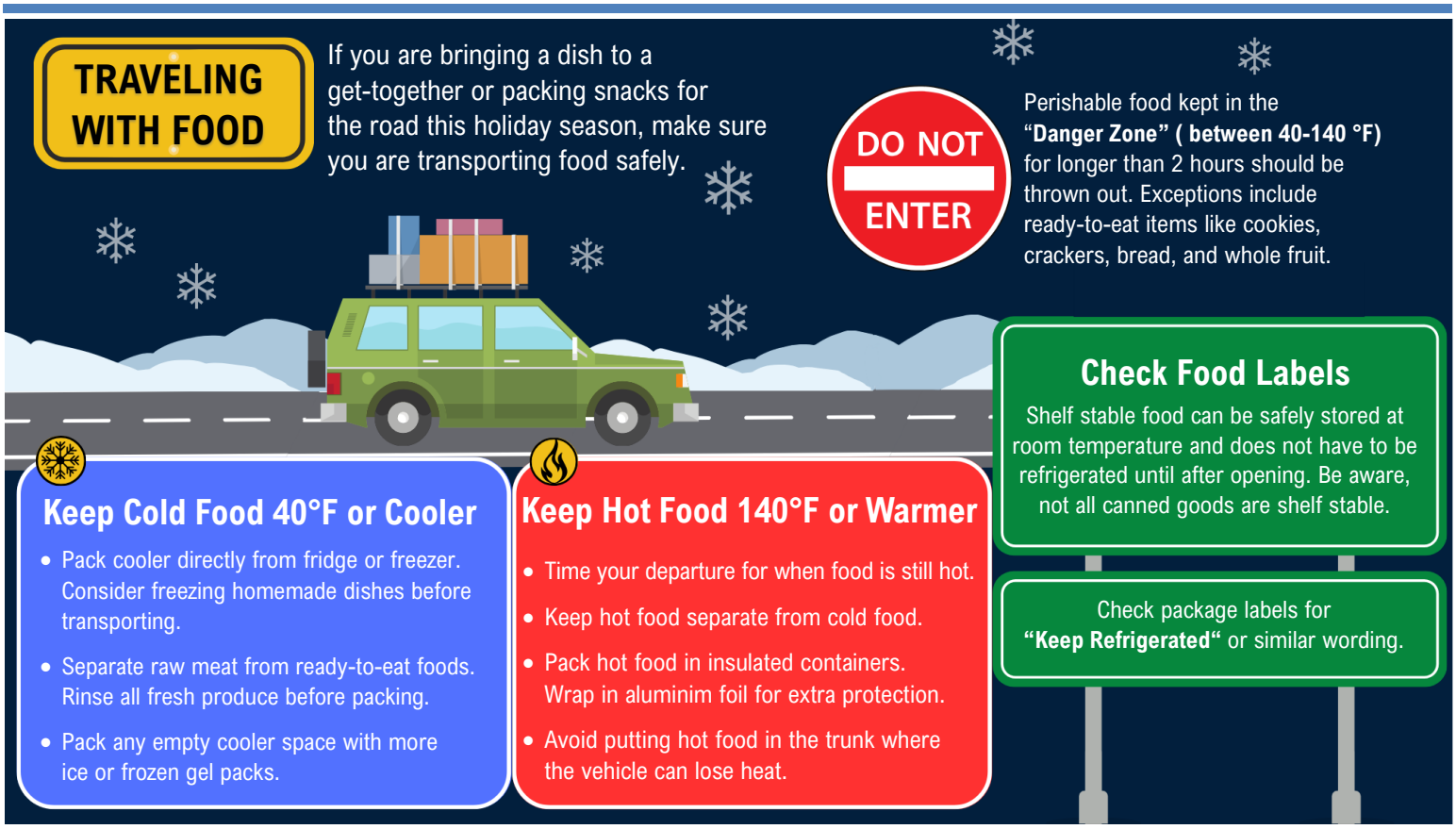
After the measles vaccination program was established, measles cases dropped by 99%.

Contact the Bureau of Epidemiology

Sign up to receive the quarterly Safe Travel Bulletin or to give topic ideas ra-pwsafetravel@pa.gov.

TRAVELING WITH FOOD

If you are bringing a dish to a get-together or packing snacks for the road this holiday season, make sure you are transporting food safely.



Perishable food kept in the **"Danger Zone" (between 40-140 °F)** for longer than 2 hours should be thrown out. Exceptions include ready-to-eat items like cookies, crackers, bread, and whole fruit.

Keep Cold Food 40°F or Cooler

- Pack cooler directly from fridge or freezer. Consider freezing homemade dishes before transporting.
- Separate raw meat from ready-to-eat foods. Rinse all fresh produce before packing.
- Pack any empty cooler space with more ice or frozen gel packs.

Keep Hot Food 140°F or Warmer

- Time your departure for when food is still hot.
- Keep hot food separate from cold food.
- Pack hot food in insulated containers. Wrap in aluminim foil for extra protection.
- Avoid putting hot food in the trunk where the vehicle can lose heat.

Check Food Labels

Shelf stable food can be safely stored at room temperature and does not have to be refrigerated until after opening. Be aware, not all canned goods are shelf stable.

Check package labels for **"Keep Refrigerated"** or similar wording.

Keep Food Safety on Your Holiday Menu

Clean Hands and Surfaces

Before you begin cooking, wash your hands well with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Also wash your hands during food preparation, especially after handling raw ingredients. Keep your cooking area clean by washing your utensils, cutting boards, and countertops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food.

Keep Germs Out of the Kitchen

Do not cook when you have signs of being sick.

Separate Raw from Cooked

Separate raw meats, poultry, seafood, and their juices from ready-to-eat foods. Use different cutting boards and utensils for raw and for cooked items and clean them between uses.

Safe Egg Handling

Salmonella and other harmful germs can live outside and inside normal-looking eggs. Some holiday food favorites can contain raw eggs, including eggnog, tiramisu, hollandaise sauce, and Caesar dressing. Always use pasteurized eggs when making these and other foods made with raw eggs.

Do Not Eat or Taste Raw Dough or Batter

Raw dough or batter made with flour or eggs can contain harmful germs, such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. Some manufactures offer edible cookie dough that uses pasteurized eggs or no eggs, and heat-treated flour. Read the label carefully to make sure the dough or batter is meant to be eaten without baking.

Stay Informed

Familiarize yourself with food recalls and food safety guidelines.

Refrigerate Promptly and Properly

Never leave perishable food out of the fridge for more than 2 hours. Bacteria grows quickly on food in the "Danger Zone."*

Do Not Overcrowd Refrigerators

Containers of warm foods can increase the refrigerator's internal temperature. Use shallow storage containers to allow for quick cooling of hot food before refrigerating.

Thaw Frozen Food Safely

Never thaw food on the counter because bacteria can grow quickly in the parts of the food that reach room temperature. You may safely thaw foods in the refrigerator or in cold water. Plan to fully cook meat and poultry immediately after thawing in a microwave because some areas of the food may become warm enough to be in the temperature "Danger Zone."*

Cook Thoroughly

Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked safely. Remember that different types of foods have specific safe internal temperatures. For example, poultry should reach 165°F, while ground meats should reach 160°F.

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