



Health Matters

Stay Safe & Breathe Easy During Hot, Smoky Summers

Summer brings sunshine, but it can also bring the dual threat of extreme heat and wildfire smoke. Both can be tough on your health, but with a few simple steps, you can protect yourself and your family.

Your Home is Your Safe Haven

When it's hot and smoky, the safest place to be is indoors. You can improve your indoor air quality by using a high-efficiency HEPA filter or an HVAC system with a good filter to stay cool, a heat pump or air conditioning unit can help maintain a safe indoor temperature. The Island Opportunity Council has resources for those in need.

A great do-it yourself option is to attach a furnace filter to a box fan: https://deohs.washington.edu/sites/default/files/AirFilterInfographic_FINAL.pdf

Be Smart When You Go Outside

When headed out during high heat, wear light, loose-fitting clothes and drink plenty of water throughout

the day. Avoid sugary drinks and alcohol, as they can dehydrate you.

Remember to take breaks in the shade and pay attention to your body. During these challenging weather days, remember to check on family, friends, and neighbors, especially those who are elderly or have health conditions.

Learn more:

[Wildfire Smoke Safety](#)
[Extreme Heat Precautions](#)

Cooling Centers: <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/767/Cooling-Centers-in-Island-County>



Dizziness, nausea, and headaches may signal heat stroke—seek medical attention and take steps to cool down



Tips to stay cool this summer:

- ✓ Keep windows and doors closed, recirculating A/C to keep air clean and cool.
- ✓ Take a cool shower or apply cool, wet cloths to body.
- ✓ Avoid burning candles or using gas stoves on poor air quality days.
- ✓ Sometimes safety hazards can be microscopic. Check for any warning signs posted to ensure increased bacteria levels aren't present before diving in.
- ✓ Limit time outdoors in high heat and avoid strenuous activity.
- ✓ Don't leave children or dogs in hot cars. On a 70°F day, your car can reach 104°F in just 30 minutes!



- ✓ A well-fitted KN95 or N95 mask is essential on smoky days.
- ✓ Wear sunscreen. Sunburn affects your body's ability to cool down and can make you dehydrated. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and put on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher 30.





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Summer Food Safety

Stay food safe this summer! Pack foods cold, grill and serve at proper temperatures, avoid cross-contamination, and remember to discard anything that is left out too long. Here are some easy steps to make sure you have a safe and happy summer!

Pack and Transport Safely

- Keep cold foods at ≤ 40 Degrees Fahrenheit ($^{\circ}\text{F}$) using ice or gel packs - store frozen meats to stay colder longer.
- Use separate coolers for food and drink to help avoid temperature spikes.
- Minimize opening coolers to keep items cold.
- Prevent cross-contamination by wrapping raw meats separately and not letting the juices touch other food.
- Wash produce under running water or buy labeled "ready-to-eat".

Clean Safely

- Bring water, soap, and towels for handwashing. Wipes and sanitizer work too!
- Keep cutting boards, utensils, and serving dishes clean. Never reuse platters used for raw meats!



Cook to Safe Temperatures

- ✓ Always use a food thermometer; visual cues are not reliable!
- ✓ **Ground meat:** 160°F
- ✓ **Fresh beef/pork chops/roasts:** 145°F
- ✓ **Poultry (whole/parts):** 165°F
- ✓ **Seafood:** 145°F
- ✓ **Leftovers/Casseroles:** 165°F



Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold

- Avoid the "Danger Zone", which is (40 – 140°F).
- Don't leave food out >2 hrs (or >1 hr if air is $>90^{\circ}\text{F}$).
- Keep cold foods in coolers until served; hot foods stay in insulated coolers.

4 Key Steps to Ensure Food Safety:



1 Clean: Hands, surfaces, and produce



2 Separate: Raw meats from cooked/ready-to-eat foods.



3 Cook: Always use a thermometer to reach safe temperatures.



4 Chill: Refrigerate perishable items quickly (≤ 2 hrs, 1 hr if $>90^{\circ}\text{F}$).

If Illness Occurs



Symptoms like nausea, diarrhea, and cramps typically appear within 1-3 days; seek medical attention promptly if they worsen.

For more information about food safety protocols, permitting, and resources for reporting illness in Island County, visit our website: <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/187/Food-Safety-Program>

More Resources:

Download the full Food & Drug Administration Food Safety Sheet: <https://www.fda.gov/media/79871/download>

Information about the safe storage, handling, and preparation of Hot Dogs:

<https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/meat-catfish/hot-dogs-food-safety>

Learn about and check for toxic algal blooms in lakes:

<https://www.nwtoxicalgae.org/>

Safe Swimming in Island County

Even the best water enthusiasts can misjudge water temperature and currents. Always wear a properly fitted life jacket.

**Children 12 years or younger must wear a life jacket on boats under 19 feet in Washington.*



Learn basic swimming and water safety skills with swim lessons early & often.



Recreational boats must carry one U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket for each person aboard. The life jacket must be available and accessible.

Go to a pool, it's the safest place to swim!



Never swim while sick, and take kids on frequent bathroom breaks.



Avoid drinking alcohol and using cannabis when swimming or boating.

Resources for Water Safety:

Water Recreation and Safety guidance from the Washington State Department of Health:
<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/water-recreation>

Water Safety for Lakes, Beaches, and Rivers from the Washington State Department of Health:
<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/water-recreation/lake-river-and-beach-safety>

Check the status of your saltwater beach:
<https://gis.ecology.wa.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e32edf4767184fd88e4ce2aa367ffd5c>

Loaner Life Jacket Program:
<https://parks.wa.gov/about/rules-and-safety/boater-education-safety/life-jacket-loaner-program>

Septic Systems in Island County

Avoid summer septic failures!

Don't put sprinklers, bonfires, hot tubs, or pools over your septic system components. Heat and heavy weight can cause unnecessary wear and tear on your septic system, leading to failure.

For help locating your septic system components, visit the Island County Public Portal to search for your As-Built map: <https://co-island-wa.smartgovcommunity.com/Parcels/ParcelHome>

To learn how to spot septic failures, visit our website:
<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/677/Failures>



Shellfish Update and Addressing Algae Blooms

Biotoxins are produced by naturally occurring microscopic algae. Warm temperatures, abundant sunlight, and nutrients can cause these algae to grow rapidly and form an algal bloom. These blooms can raise biotoxin levels in the water, which can concentrate in shellfish as they filter feed. High levels of biotoxins can cause illness and even death when shellfish are consumed.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) is commonly caused by algal blooms referred to as the “red tide,” but this name can be misleading. A red-colored bloom does not always indicate the presence of biotoxins; toxins may be present even in clear water. An example is the “tomato soup” colored Noctiluca bloom many observed in Holmes Harbor this spring, which is not considered harmful to people or pets.

In May, PSP biotoxin closures for butter and varnish clams

were lifted for some areas of Island County. Other areas of the county remain closed. Closures are issued by the WA State Department of Health. Always check the Department of Health’s Shellfish Safety Map (doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety) before and after harvesting for the most up-to-date safety information.

The Washington Department of Health continues to conduct regular biotoxin and water quality monitoring to ensure recreational shellfish harvesting remains safe.

Resources:

Shellfish Safety Information:
<https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/biotoxin/biotoxin.html>

Biotoxins Illness and Prevention Program:
<https://doh.wa.gov/about-us/programs-and-services/environmental-public-health/>



Myth or Truth?

Toxic shellfish look different from non-toxic shellfish.

Myth. There are no visual clues to tell you when shellfish are toxic. They look exactly the same as shellfish that are safe to eat.

Before digging for shellfish, I should check the Shellfish Safety Map or call the county health department.

True. The county where you’re planning to dig will have current information on beaches closed for pollution or other problems.

Cooking shellfish in boiling water will remove toxins, making them safe to eat.

Myth. Biotoxins are not destroyed by cooking. Only pathogens such as Vibrio and Norovirus are destroyed with proper cooking.

For more Myths and Misconceptions about Biotoxins:

<https://doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/shellfish/recreational-shellfish/illnesses/biotoxins/myths-and-misconceptions>

Families & Caregivers: Ensure children are ready for school!

Washington State requires children entering school, child care, or other early learning programs to receive certain vaccinations before they can start. These immunization requirements apply to all enrolled children, including those learning remotely. Stay up to date with our handy resources, including locations around Island County where childhood immunizations are available.



Resources:

CDC Recommended Schedules:
[Immunize.org](https://www.immunize.org)

Island Child Immunizations:
<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/documentcenter/view/10639>

