



NEWS RELEASE

L. BROOKS PATTERSON, OAKLAND COUNTY EXECUTIVE

HEALTH DIVISION

Department of Health & Human Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Consumer Food Safety Tips for Healthy Holidays

Pontiac, MI (November 21, 2008) - Parties, family dinners, and other gatherings where food is served are all part of holiday fun. But this can change to misery if the food makes you and your guests sick. Consumers have a part to play when it comes to handling food in the home.

"If consumers follow the four basic food safety practices, clean, separate, cook, and chill, they can help to prevent foodborne illnesses," says Tony Drautz, Environmental Health Services Administrator with the Oakland County Health Division.

Clean - Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food. Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before going on to the next. Rinse fruits and vegetables well under running water and use a brush to remove dirt. Do not rinse raw meats and poultry before cooking.

Separate - Don't give bacteria the chance to spread from one food to another. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from all other foods while grocery shopping, preparing, and storing food. Use one cutting board for foods that will be cooked and another for ready-to-eat foods, such as raw fruits and vegetables.

Cook - Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough temperature to kill harmful bacteria. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat, poultry, and fish are cooked to a safe temperature. To check the temperature of a turkey, stick the thermometer into the inner most part of the thigh and wing and into the thickest part of the breast. The turkey is done when the temperature reaches 165°F. Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating and do not eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs.

Chill - Refrigerate foods and leftovers within two hours because bacteria grow quickly at room temperature. Set your fridge no higher than 40°F and the freezer at 0°F. Never defrost food at room temperature; food can be defrosted safely in the fridge, under cold running water or in the microwave. Food thawed under cold running water or in the microwave should be cooked right away. Allow the correct amount of time for food to properly thaw. A 20-pound turkey needs four to five days to thaw completely when thawed in the fridge.

Typical symptoms of foodborne illness are stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhea. Symptoms are not usually long-lasting in healthy people, but foodborne illnesses can be severe and even life-threatening to older adults, infants and young children, pregnant women, people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or any condition that weakens the immune system. For more information on food safety, call 248-858-1280 or visit the Oakland County Health Division website at www.oakgov.com/health.

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NORTH OAKLAND HEALTH CENTER
1200 NORTH TELEGRAPH ROAD
PONTIAC MICHIGAN 48341-0432
General Information 248-858-1280

SOUTH OAKLAND HEALTH CENTER
27725 GREENFIELD ROAD
SOUTHFIELD MICHIGAN 48076-3663
General Information 248-424-7000

WEST OAKLAND HEALTH CENTER
1010 E WEST MAPLE ROAD
WALLED LAKE MICHIGAN 48390-3571
General Information 248-926-3300

If a turkey is not properly thawed, the outside of the turkey will be done before the inside, and the inside will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing bacteria.

thoroughly under running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.

- Do not rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking. "Washing these foods makes it more likely for bacteria to spread to areas around the sink and countertops," says Davidson.

2. SEPARATE:

Don't give bacteria the opportunity to spread from one food to another (cross-contaminate).

- Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood and their juices away from foods that won't be cooked while shopping in the store, and while preparing and storing at home.
- Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked (raw meat, poultry, and seafood) and another one only for ready-to-eat foods (such as raw fruits and vegetables).
- Do not put cooked meat on an unwashed plate that has held raw meat.

3. COOK:

Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria.

- "Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness," says Davidson. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat, poultry, and fish are cooked to a safe internal temperature. To check a turkey for doneness, insert a food thermometer into the inner thigh area near the breast of the

turkey but not touching bone. The turkey is done when the temperature reaches 180°F. If the turkey is stuffed, the temperature of the stuffing should be 165°F. Make sure oysters in oyster dressing are thoroughly cooked.

- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. When making your own eggnog or other recipe calling for raw eggs, use pasteurized shell eggs, liquid or frozen pasteurized egg products, or powdered egg whites.
- Don't eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs.

4. CHILL:

Refrigerate foods quickly because harmful bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature.

- Refrigerate leftovers and takeout foods within two hours.
- Set your refrigerator no higher than 40°F and the freezer at 0°F. Check both periodically with an appliance thermometer.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Food can be defrosted safely in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Food thawed in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately.
- Allow the correct amount of time to properly thaw food. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs two to three days to thaw completely when thawed in the



refrigerator. If a turkey is not properly thawed, the outside of the turkey will be done before the inside, and the inside will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing bacteria.

- Don't taste food that looks or smells questionable. Davidson says, "A good rule to follow is, when in doubt, throw it out."

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For More Information

www.foodsafety.gov
www.cfsan.fda.gov

FDA Food Information Line
1-888-SAFEFOOD
(1-888-723-3366)

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline
1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854)
TTY 1-800-256-7072