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REMEMBER FOOD SAFETY WHEN PREPARING HOLIDAY MEALS



Contact:

Communications Office

NewsMedia@flhealth.gov

850-245-4111

Tallahassee, Fla. — Families and friends will get together over the holidays to celebrate and to create new memories that will last a lifetime. Don't let a foodborne illness spoil the memory of your holiday gatherings. Foodborne illness affects one in six Americans every year.

"Preparing food and sharing meals is a cherished part the holiday season," said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. "It is important that we all practice safe food handling every day to prevent foodborne illness."

Certain individuals can suffer from severe complications if sickened by a foodborne illness. Individuals at greater risk are pregnant women, young children, older adults and people with weakened immune systems. Adopting safe food handling practices is the best way to protect your loved ones and ensure everyone enjoys their holiday meal.

Prevent foodborne illness with the [following recommendations](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Stay Clean

- Don't prepare food for others if you have recently experienced any illness.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Make sure your cooking area is clean: wash cutting boards, utensils and countertops often with hot water and soap.

Prepare your meals safely

- Separate raw meats from other foods and use separate cutting boards to avoid cross contamination.
- Use a food thermometer to ensure that foods are cooked to a [safe internal temperature](#).
- Keep your refrigerator set below 40°F and refrigerate perishable items.
- Keep food cold during transportation to minimize bacterial growth that can make you sick.

Properly handle leftovers

- After everyone has enjoyed their meal, divide all remaining leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator within two hours of the meal.
- Discard all perishable food items that have been left out of the refrigerator for longer than two hours.
- Always [thaw foods properly](#) and reheat holiday leftovers to a minimum of 165°F.

For more information on how to keep your family safe from foodborne-illness this holiday season, visit <http://www.foodsafety.gov>.

If you believe you have a foodborne illness, please report the incident to your local county health department or complete the online food and waterborne illness complaint form at <http://www.foodandwaterdisease.com>.

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