

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



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Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 26, 2013

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Holiday Heath Tip: Don't Allow Foodborne-Illness to Spoil Your Holiday Meals

TALLAHASSEE – This holiday season, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) encourages Floridians to properly prepare meals and store food in order to prevent foodborne-illness or diseases caused by eating contaminated foods and drinks.

“Preventing foodborne-illness is important to keep your family safe and healthy during the holidays and year round,” said Jamie DeMent, the Department’s Coordinator of the Food and Waterborne Disease Program. “Floridians should practice four simple steps to stay healthy while cooking this holiday season—clean, cook, chill, and separate.”

An easy way to prevent foodborne-illness is to maintain a clean and tidy kitchen. Insist that any helping hands in the kitchen this holiday season are cleaned thoroughly and often. Wash any objects that are in contact with raw poultry – including hands, cutting boards, knives, etc. — in hot, soapy water. Also, be sure that all uncooked meat and poultry are prepared individually and separated from vegetables and cooked food. Keep all countertop and work areas clean with disinfectant spray. Those who experienced a gastrointestinal illness during the past two weeks should refrain from preparing meals for others.

Planning ahead to ensure that you have enough time to fully prepare and cook a turkey is crucial. A frozen turkey needs 24 hours to thaw for every five pounds of bird. Therefore, a 10 lb. turkey will require two days of premium thawing time before serving. Thawing your turkey in the fridge reduces the risk of foodborne-illnesses from bacteria, which multiply rapidly at room temperature or in warm environments. Stuffing your turkey prior to cooking it allows raw poultry juices to absorb into the stuffing, causing improper cooking of the turkey to occur. Be sure to thoroughly cook the turkey at 325 degrees. The turkey’s internal temperature should stay at 180 degrees, as any temperature below this can result in bacterial growth.

Experts say you should refrigerate leftovers within two hours of preparation. Leaving food out too long creates a prime breeding ground for bacterial growth. When storing your leftovers, separate raw meats, poultry, eggs and seafood into their own containers. Never leave food on the table and insist on heating up leftovers to their proper temperature of 165 degrees. Be sure to throw away food that is cloudy or mushy or food with an unusual odor. Also dispose of food that is from a leaking can or food that changes appearance, color and/or shape over a period of time.

For more information on how to keep your family safe from foodborne-illness this holiday season please visit <http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>, <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/> and <http://www.fda.gov/Food/default.htm>. If you experience a foodborne-illness please report it to your local county health department or file an online complaint at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/food-and-waterborne-disease/online-food-complaint-form.html>

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