

Cook County Department of Public Health

Cook County Health & Hospitals System

(formerly Cook County Bureau of Health Services)

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Andrea L. Zopp

1010 Lake Street, Suite 300
Oak Park, Illinois 60301

Telephone (708) 492-2000
TDD (708) 492-2002

Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H.
Chief Operating Officer

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Media Contact: Amy Poore 708-492-2015

Public Health Officials Remind Residents To Prevent Foodborne Illness During Thanksgiving Holiday

Keep it clean, cook it properly.

The Cook County Department of Public Health would like to offer some ways to keep the holidays safe and healthy by avoiding Foodborne Illness.

Basic steps to preventing most food poisonings:

- Wash your hands before you handle any food.
- Clean utensils, counter tops and dishes in hot soapy water between each step in food preparation.
- Towels and wash cloths should be laundered regularly, as bacteria can linger.

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold:

Cook food to a temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit (F) kills most bacteria that cause food poisoning. Keep cooked foods at a holding temperature between 140 degrees and 165 degrees F if you do not plan to serve them immediately.

When preparing a turkey:

- Thaw the turkey in the refrigerator. A 20-pound bird takes two to three days to defrost. Be sure the turkey has no ice in the cavity before preparation.
- If you mix stuffing a day ahead, pre-mix only the dry ingredients. Do not stuff bird until you are ready to cook. Stuff loosely so the stuffing cooks thoroughly.
- Insert a meat thermometer into the center of the thickest part of the thigh, breast or stuffing. Temperatures should register 180 degrees F for turkey, 165 degrees F for stuffing and 170 - 175 degrees F for boneless roasts.
- After the meal, refrigerate leftovers immediately in small containers. Do not allow foods to sit several hours at room temperature. Refrigerate stuffing and other items separately from the bird.
- It is important to serve leftovers either very cold (directly from the refrigerator) or very hot (at least 165 degrees F).

Avoid foods such as raw oysters, egg drinks, mousse or bread pudding, unless made with pasteurized eggs or an egg substitute. Soft-boiled eggs and rare or medium hamburger can harbor bacteria that cause food poisoning. It is important that young children, the elderly, pregnant women and those who are ill or whose immune systems are compromised not eat raw or undercooked animal products or raw oysters unless they have consulted their physicians.

For more information, contact the Cook County Department of Public Health at 708-492-2000. Or visit our website at <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org>.

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