

# COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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**Contact:** Amy Poore: 708-633-4039

## **Prevent Food Poisoning This Holiday Cooking Season**

*Public health officials offer safety tips to properly prepare and store food.*

The Cook County Department of Public Health is reminding residents to take precautions to avoid food poisoning this holiday cooking season.

### **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 meat, poultry, and eggs thoroughly. Using a thermometer to measure the internal temperature of meat is a good way to be sure that it is cooked sufficiently to kill bacteria: 145°F for whole meats, 160°F for ground meats, and 165°F for all poultry. Eggs should be cooked until the yolk is firm. Maintain hot cooked food at 140 degrees F or above. When reheating cooked food, reheat to 165 degrees F.

### **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 an internal temperature of 165 degrees F for turkey and stuffing.
- 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 do 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 708-633-4000. Or visit our website at <http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org>.

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15900 S. Cicero Avenue • Building E • Oak Forest, Illinois 60452 • Tel: (708) 633-4000

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