

Food Safety-Avoid Foodborne Illness This Thanksgiving

1. Why is food safety important?

Safe steps in food handling, cooking, and proper storage are important in preventing foodborne illness, especially during the holiday season. These guidelines will help prevent you and your family from getting sick from food.

2. What causes foodborne illness?

Raw or undercooked meats including turkey, chicken, beef and lamb can contain Campylobacter, Salmonella or E.coli bacteria that cause diarrhea and other health problems. Cooking meats to the proper temperature can kill these bacteria; freezing meats does not kill these bacteria.

3. What are symptoms of foodborne illness?

Symptoms of foodborne illness, also known as food poisoning, include stomach pain, vomiting, and diarrhea, all of which can start hours or days after consuming contaminated food or drink. For healthy people, most symptoms usually go away after a few hours or days without treatment. However, foodborne illness can be severe and even life-threatening in older adults, infants and young children, pregnant women, and those with conditions that weaken their immune systems

4. How can you prevent foodborne illness?

There are 4 important tips to preventing foodborne illnesses

- Clean – Wash hands and surfaces often** with warm soapy water to prevent the spread of germs throughout the kitchen.
- Separate – Don't cross contaminate.** Spreading germs from one food product to another is called cross-contamination. To prevent this from happening separate raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods. Wash hands, cutting boards, dishes and utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat.

3. Cook – Cook food to proper temperatures.

Turkey, Chicken & Duck	165° F
Egg Dishes	160° F
Beef, Veal, Lamb, Pork – Ground	160° F
Beef, Veal, Lamb, Pork – Steaks & Roasts	145° F
Fish	145° F

- Chill – Refrigerate promptly.** Keep cold foods cold (40°F or below). Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours. Throw out foods that should have been kept cold but have been left out for more than two hours.



Key Points:

- Wash hands and surfaces before and after handling raw foods, including uncooked meats.
- Use a meat thermometer to make sure that your turkey is cooked to 165° F when measured in the thickest part of the thigh.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Proper food handling can prevent foodborne illness.

For more information:

USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline

1-800-674-6854

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

cdc.gov/features/turkeytime/

LA County Department of Public Health

publichealth.lacounty.gov/acd/Food.htm

5. How can you prevent foodborne illness during Thanksgiving and other holidays?

When purchasing a fresh turkey, plan to cook it within 1- 2 days after purchase. Fresh pre-stuffed turkeys, if not handled properly, can be unsafe because of harmful bacteria that may be in the stuffing. Frozen pre-stuffed turkeys are safe because they have been processed under controlled conditions.

To thaw a turkey:

- Refrigerator: Place frozen turkey in original wrapper in the refrigerator (40° F or below). Allow approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds of turkey. After thawing, keep turkey refrigerated for only 1-2 days before cooking. A turkey that has been thawed in the refrigerator can be re-frozen one time. It is not recommended to refreeze a turkey that has been thawed using other methods.
- Cold Water: Place securely wrapped turkey in cold water and change the water every 30 minutes. Allow about 30 minutes defrosting time per pound of turkey. Cook immediately after thawing.
- Microwave: Check to see if the turkey is small enough and fits comfortably in the microwave. Check manufacturer's instructions for the size of turkey that will fit in your microwave oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing. Cook immediately after thawing.
- Do not thaw frozen pre-stuffed turkeys.

To cook a turkey:

- When roasting a whole turkey, use a food thermometer to make sure it cooks to 165°F or higher. Insert the thermometer in the thickest part of the thigh, but not against the bone.
- For safety and uniform doneness, cook stuffing separately in a casserole dish.
- For pre-cooked turkey dinners, eat within 2 hours or refrigerate components separately, then reheat to a temperature of at least 165°F.
- Frozen pre-stuffed turkeys: Cook from the frozen state by following package directions.

Other food handling tips include:

- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly before eating or cutting into them.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when re-heating.
- Keep hot foods hot. Use chafing dishes or pans with Sternos or other heating devices or keep foods in the oven at a temperature to ensure they remain at 135°F or above.
- Leftovers should be used within 3 to 4 days.
- "Taste testing" food or drinks to see if they have spoiled is not recommended.

Foodborne illnesses can be caused by raw or lightly cooked eggs or egg products used in foods such as salad dressings, cookie or cake batter, sauces such as hollandaise sauce, and beverages such as eggnog. Avoid eating uncooked items containing raw or lightly cooked eggs or egg products. Substitute pasteurized eggs when cooking these foods. If you get a foodborne illness, seek medical attention.