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Gobble! Gobble! Remember Food Safety This Holiday Season
Poor Food Preparation and Storage Can Spoil Your Holiday Festivities

FRANKFORT, KY (Nov. 18, 2016) - With the holiday season right around the corner, many people will be enjoying celebrations by entertaining friends and family, having parties and preparing feasts. From the buffet table to the office party, food becomes a focus of celebrations. The Department for Public Health (DPH), a part of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, wants the public to keep safe health practices in mind.

Many holiday dinners incorporate meat and poultry, possible sources of foodborne disease, a serious public health concern that is more common than many people assume. In fact, 1 in 6 Americans will get a foodborne illness this year.

“Great food is one of the many wonderful holiday traditions in Kentucky and we want everyone to enjoy food happily and safely this Thanksgiving,” said CHFS Cabinet Secretary Vickie Yates Brown Glisson. “That is why we are reminding Kentuckians to be careful about purchasing and preparing food and to pay close attention to simple hygiene practices, like handwashing, food storage and clean-up. Following a few simple guidelines is all it takes to prevent foodborne illness.”

Holiday buffets, party trays or even a poorly stored turkey could be the culprit of disease. Improperly stored or handled food items provide breeding grounds for bacterial contamination, exposing diners to diseases such as salmonella, E. coli or botulism, among others.

“Foodborne illness is a serious public health concern that can have debilitating – and sometimes life threatening - effects,” said DPH Commissioner Hiram Polk, M.D. “Please remember to follow our recommended steps for food storage and preparation this holiday season.”

Public health’s recommended guidelines for safe food preparation, serving and storing follow in the lists below.

Shopping for your feast:

- Make room for items in your fridge and freezer.



- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, seafood and poultry. Keep all food away from household chemicals in your shopping cart and in bags.
- Refrigerate perishable foods as soon as you get them home from the store.
- Pay attention to “sell by” and “use by” dates.
- Buy a food thermometer and use it faithfully to ensure that the recommended cook temperatures below are met.

Preparing your feast:

- Wash hands, surfaces and utensils between each food-prep step.
- Thaw frozen turkey in a refrigerator in its original packaging, using the formula four pounds per 24 hours (i.e. and eight pound turkey would need to thaw for 48 hours).
- Cook turkey breast and stuffing to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit (F).
- Turkey thighs are best at 175 degrees F.
- Keep hot foods above 140 degrees F. Refrigerate all cold foods until ready to serve at 40 degrees F or lower.
- Rinse fresh fruit and vegetables just before serving or consuming unless labeled “ready-to-eat” or “prewashed.”

Eating your leftovers:

- Leftovers cool more quickly in shallow containers. Bring gravy to a boil before reserving.
- Reheat leftovers to at least 165 degrees F.
- Eat or freeze leftovers within 3 to 4 days.
- Eat or freeze gravy within 2 days.

Most importantly, if you are unsure if a food has been stored safely and is still good, it's best to follow the old food safety maxim of “when in doubt, throw it out,” said Hendren.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) could suffer from foodborne illness this year, resulting in roughly 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. More information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture is posted [here](#).

For more Kentucky-specific food safety information for consumers, visit the Kentucky Food Safety Branch [website](#).

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and health care programs, including Medicaid, the Department for Community Based Services and the Department for Public Health. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full and part-time employees throughout the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.