



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Food Safety Tips for the Holidays

Keep your holiday meals safe from foodborne illness

FRANKFORT, KY (Nov. 23, 2020) – This holiday season, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH), an agency within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), urges consumers to take precautions in purchasing and preparing food items and to pay close attention to good hygiene practices to combat foodborne illness during the upcoming holiday season.

In addition, Kentuckians should follow the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recommendation](#) to avoid Thanksgiving travel to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Kentucky Department for Public Health has provided further guidance related to COVID-19 to help Kentuckians have a safe holiday week here:

- English: [Full Guidance](#); [One-Pager](#); [Single Slide](#)
- Spanish: [Full Guidance](#); [One-Pager](#); [Single Slide](#)
- Recorded PSAs (in partnership with RadioLex): [Bosnian](#), [Chinese](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Japanese](#), [Korean](#), [Persian](#), [Russian](#), [Spanish](#)

"Unsafe handling and undercooking of food can lead to serious foodborne illness," said Dr. Steven Stack, commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Public Health. "Turkeys may contain *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, harmful pathogens that are only destroyed by properly preparing and cooking the turkey. Similarly, leaving leftovers out for too long, or not taking care to properly clean cooking and serving

surfaces, can lead to other types of illness. We want to be sure that all Kentuckians know the steps they can take to help prepare a safe and enjoyable holiday meal."

Here are a few simple food safety tips to avoid getting sick during the holiday season:

Safe Storage Temperatures

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Hot foods should be held at 135 degrees Fahrenheit or warmer. Cold foods should be kept at least 41 degrees Fahrenheit or below.
- Foods that sit out on the buffet table for longer than two hours should be discarded.

Safe Food Handling

- Always wash your hands before and after handling food.
- Use two cutting boards. One should be used for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish and the other for cutting cooked food or preparing salads.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before preparing.
- Keep your kitchen, dishes and utensils clean.
- Never put cooked food back on plates or platters where raw meat or poultry were previously stored.
- Wash and sanitize food contact surfaces often.
- Never thaw a turkey or other meats/poultry on the kitchen counter. Thawing at room temperature increases the risk of bacteria growth at the surface even though the interior may still be chilled.
- Thaw turkey and other frozen meat items in a refrigerator with a temperature of 41 degrees Fahrenheit or colder. The turkey should be thawed in its original wrap, on a tray placed in the bottom section of the refrigerator. A 20-pound turkey needs four to five days to thaw completely when thawed in the refrigerator.
- A frozen turkey may also be completely submerged under cool running water at a temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit or less, or thawed in a microwave, provided that the turkey is cooked immediately after thawing.

Cook Thoroughly

- If you are cooking foods in advance of your party, be sure to cook foods thoroughly to a safe minimum internal temperature.
- Use a metal-stemmed meat thermometer to determine when the turkey is done by inserting the thermometer in the thickest part of the turkey thigh. When the thermometer reaches between 165-180 degrees Fahrenheit, the turkey is done.
- Safe cooking temperatures for other foods are as follows: seafood, 145 degrees Fahrenheit; ground beef, veal, lamb and pork, 160 degrees Fahrenheit; ground turkey, chicken and other poultry products, 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Don't eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs.
- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm.
- When making your own eggnog or other recipe calling for raw eggs, use pasteurized shell eggs, liquid or frozen pasteurized egg products, or powdered egg whites. Unpasteurized, raw shell eggs and egg products could contain Salmonella and other pathogens. Pasteurized shell eggs are now available at many grocery stores. Like all eggs, they must be kept refrigerated for safety and quality. Pasteurized shell eggs can be identified by a red "P" in a circle stamped on the shell.

Leftovers

- Leftovers should be stored in the refrigerator within two hours after cooking is complete, this includes pumpkin pie.
- Leftovers should be divided into smaller portions and stored in several shallow containers in the refrigerator.
- Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within three to four days. Use gravy within one to two days.
- Frozen leftovers should be eaten within two to six months.
- Reheat all leftovers to 165 degrees Fahrenheit throughout or until steaming hot. Soups, sauces and gravies should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute.

Most importantly, if you are uncertain a food has been stored safely or is still safe to eat, it's best to follow the old food safety maxim of "when in doubt, throw it out."

For more information, visit the DPH Food Safety Branch website at <https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dphps/fsb/Pages/default.aspx> or call (502) 564-7181.

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