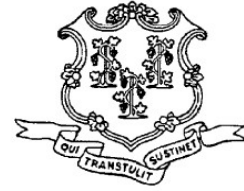


# News



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **State Health Department Urges Food Safety Practices**

**Hartford** – The Department of Public Health (DPH) reminds the public to keep food safety in mind to stay healthy this holiday season.

Many holiday dinners incorporate meat and poultry, a possible source of foodborne disease unless handled and prepared properly. This holiday season, DPH urges consumers to follow public health guidelines when purchasing and preparing food items, paying particularly close attention to the basic tenets of food safety and good hygiene.

Holiday buffets, party trays or even a poorly stored turkey can be the culprit of disease. Improperly stored food items provide breeding grounds for bacterial contamination, which causes illness that affects an average of 76 million people each year.

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

- Wash hands - Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water and dry your hands with a paper towel following restroom use, before preparing foods, after handling raw meat and before eating. Clean hands will help prevent the spread of potentially illness-causing microorganisms.
- Clean - Wash and sanitize food-contact surfaces often. To sanitize utensils, immerse for 30 seconds in clean, hot water at 170 °F, or immerse for at least one minute in a clean solution containing at least 50 parts per million of chlorine (one teaspoon of 5.25 percent household bleach per gallon of water). Bacteria can spread and get onto cutting boards, knives and counter tops. Wash fruits and vegetables before preparing.
- Thaw properly - Proper methods for thawing a turkey include: thawing in a refrigerator with a temperature of 41 °F or less (allow 3-4 days for thawing); placing under cool running water at a temperature of 75 °F or less; or thawing in a microwave and cooking the turkey immediately.
- Take temperatures - Cook your turkey at 325 °F until its internal temperature reaches at least 165 °F. Cooked, hot foods should be kept at 140 °F or warmer. Be sure to use a food thermometer to check temperatures. When cooking a stuffed turkey, be sure that the turkey, as well as the stuffing inside of it, reaches at least 165 °F. Even if the turkey itself reaches 165 °F, the stuffing inside may take longer to reach 165 °F, the temperature safe enough to kill any bacteria that may be present.

- Stuffing - Prepare your stuffing and turkey just before cooking. Using a cold stuffing may make it more difficult to reach the safe temperature of 165°F. Stuff the turkey loosely and use ¾ of a cup of stuffing per pound of turkey. Use a moist stuffing rather than a dry stuffing because heat destroys bacteria better in a moist environment.
- Keep it cold - Cold foods should be kept at 41 °F or less. After the turkey is served, immediately slice and refrigerate on shallow platters. Use refrigerated turkey and stuffing within three to four days. Use gravy within one to two days. If freezing leftovers, use within two to six months for best quality.
- Transport safely - Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Reheat - Leftover turkey and stuffing should be stored separately in shallow dishes or platters. Rapidly reheat leftovers to a minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.
- Proper hand washing is the most effective way to keep food and guests safe.

For more information and free literature about food safety, contact the Food Protection Program at (860) 509-7297.

*The Connecticut Department of Public Health is the state's leader in public health policy and advocacy with a mission to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of our state. To contact the department, please visit its website at [www.ct.gov/dph](http://www.ct.gov/dph) or call (860) 509-7270.*

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