



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Turkey Talk

The holiday season has arrived and so has listeria in cantaloupes, E.coli in ground beef and salmonella in nuts and dog food. The holidays are about spending time with family and food is a central focus at many holiday gatherings. It is no surprise during this busy time that many cooks take short-cuts. Therefore, the Nebraska Regional Poison Center sees an increase in food-borne illnesses during the holidays. The major source of food poisonings is from improper handling, preparation, cooking and storage.

Here are some suggestions to make your holidays safe.

DO ...

- DO** keep turkey in its original wrapping, refrigerated until ready to cook.
- DO** wash hands with soap and water for at least 15-20 seconds before preparing food.
- DO** defrost a frozen turkey by refrigeration or cold running water.
- DO** allow one day for every 5 pounds to defrost in the refrigerator. In a cold water bath, change the water every 30 minutes. A 20 pound turkey will take 12 hours to defrost in cold water.
- DO** use a meat thermometer to check if turkey is done. The turkey should cook until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees F.
- DO** remove the stuffing immediately after the turkey is cooked.
- DO** store the turkey and stuffing separately.
- DO** store leftover turkey in the refrigerator and use within 3-4 days.
- DO** store leftover stuffing and gravy in the refrigerator and use within 1-2 days.

DON'T...

- DON'T** defrost a turkey at room temperature. Bacteria can multiply to unsafe numbers on outer layers before inner layers have defrosted.
- DON'T** leave an uncooked thawed turkey out of the refrigerator longer than 2 hours.
- DON'T** partially cook the turkey one day and continue roasting the next day.
- DON'T** prepare food if you are sick or have any nose or eye infection.
- DON'T** leave leftovers out on the counter longer than 2 hours.
- DON'T** store leftover stuffing in the turkey.
- DON'T** re-freeze a completely thawed uncooked turkey.
- DON'T** stuff turkeys as it makes it difficult for the internal temperature to reach 165°F within a safe period of time. If you must stuff your turkey, stuff it lightly before cooking and leave room for the oven to cook the interior of the turkey and stuffing.

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center offers tips on Thanksgiving safety and poison prevention as a free service to the public. For more information, contact the Nebraska Regional Poison Center by calling toll-free at 1-800-222-1222.