



Turkey Talk

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in six Americans (48 million) will become ill from a food-borne illness this year, 128,000 will be hospitalized and 3,000 will die. The holiday meal and its preparation is the centerpiece of the Thanksgiving celebration and safe food handling in the kitchen is a very important part of the holiday. To keep your friends and family safe from food poisoning there are certain steps that everyone should know:

DO ...

- **DO** ask all kitchen helpers to wash their hands using warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- **DO** keep turkey in its original wrapping, refrigerated until ready to cook.
- **DO** defrost a frozen turkey by refrigeration or cold running water.
- **DO** allow one day for every 4-5 pounds to defrost in the refrigerator. In a cold water bath, change the water every 30 minutes. Make sure the water is not able to leak through the wrapping. Cook turkey immediately after thawing.
- **DO** use a meat thermometer to check if turkey is done. The turkey should cook until the internal temperature reaches a safe minimum internal temperature of 165° 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** rinse your turkey before cooking. Let the cooking process take care of the bacteria and avoid the risk of cross contamination.
- **DON'T** set your oven lower than 325° F.
- **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 on food poisoning or if you just have a question - contact the Nebraska Regional Poison Center by calling toll-free at 1-800-222-1222.