

Let's Talk Turkey: Eat, drink and be healthy for the holidays

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IDPH Offers Tips For Safe Holiday Cooking

SPRINGFIELD – First things first, **TAKE THE TURKEY OUT!** It may already be time to take the turkey out of the freezer so that it will be thawed in time for Thanksgiving. Allow approximately 24 hours for each 4 to 5 pounds of turkey when thawed in the refrigerator. A 20 to 24 pound turkey could take 5 to 6 days to thaw. Never thaw a turkey at room temperature.

“Every year, 1 in 6 Americans gets sick by consuming contaminated foods or beverages, or what is commonly referred to as food poisoning,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “By adhering to what we call ‘the big four – clean, separate, cook, and chill,’ you can avoid becoming ill and ruining your holidays.”

1. **Clean** - wash hands, cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops before and after preparing each food item.
2. **Separate** - keep raw eggs, meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from foods that won't be cooked.
3. **Cook** - use a food thermometer to make sure meat, poultry, and fish are fully cooked. Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness. Cook turkey to an internal temperature of 165°F.
4. **Chill** - divide leftovers into shallow containers and refrigerate them within two hours. Use leftovers within 3 to 4 days.

Whether gathering with family for holiday meals, or spending time with friends and colleagues at office parties and other celebrations, be cautious when eating certain foods. Foods such as raw oysters, soft-boiled eggs, steak tartare, rare or medium beef, and eggnog, mousse or bread pudding (unless made with pasteurized eggs or an egg substitute), can harbor bacteria that cause foodborne illness. Apple cider that has not been pasteurized or otherwise treated to kill bacteria can also make you sick.

A good rule of thumb is, make sure hot foods are hot (above 140°F) and cold foods are cold (below 40°F). Don't eat food that has been sitting out for more than two hours if the food is not being kept hot or cold.

More information on [can be found on the IDPH website.](#)