



Yakima Health District

News Release

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Holiday Food Safety: Avoid foodborne illness.

The Yakima Health District (YHD) is reminding community members that as Thanksgiving soon approaches, proper food storage and preparation are important to prevent illness. Dr. Teresa Everson, the Yakima Health District Health Officer says that,

"Every year, one out of every six Americans gets sick from contaminated food or beverages, usually from food that's not prepared or stored safely. Let's make sure that we spend our Thanksgiving enjoying good food and good company rather than suffering from avoidable gastrointestinal distress."

To avoid foodborne illness, please follow these tips as you prepare for holiday gatherings.

Thawing

A fresh turkey should be cooked within two days of purchase. But if your turkey is frozen, never thaw it on the counter. Here are three safe ways to thaw a turkey:

- In the refrigerator: Allow 24 hours of thawing for each four to five pounds of turkey – about three days for a 12-pound turkey or five days for a 20-pound turkey.
- In a bowl or sink filled with cold water: Keep the turkey in its original wrapping and allow 30 minutes per pound. Change water every 30 minutes.
- In the microwave: Check the manual for directions. When thawed, cook immediately.

Preparation

Wash hands and surfaces often. After working with raw turkey, always wash your hands, utensils and work surfaces to prevent bacteria from contaminating other foods. Use only clean kitchen cloths and towels and wash them promptly after wiping up meat juices.

Stuffing

For optimal safety and uniform doneness, cook the stuffing outside the turkey in a casserole dish. If you place stuffing inside the turkey, do so just before roasting and use a food thermometer. Make sure the center of the stuffing reaches a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees. Bacteria can survive in stuffing that has not reached 165 degrees and cause foodborne illness.



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Cooking

Prior to cooking, be sure the turkey is completely thawed. When cooking, use a food thermometer to check the temperature in the center of the stuffing, the wing joint and meaty portions of the breast and thigh. All pieces must reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees.

Leftovers

Refrigerate leftovers within two hours of cooking. Don't leave food on the counter to cool down. Refrigerating foods quickly keeps most harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying. Eat refrigerated leftovers within three or four days.

You can also check the Yakima Health District [website](#) for more information on food safety year-round. Remember to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). [Past News Releases Here.](#)

For more information:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
[Washington State Department of Health](#)