Holiday Tips to Prevent Food Borne Illness

Keep food safety in mind this holiday season. Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.

The Michigan Department of Community Health and the Central Michigan District Health Department urges Michigan residents to pay special attention to the handling and cooking of foods during the coming holiday season. “People at particular risk for foodborne illness, including the elderly, children, those with weak immune systems, and pregnant women, should be especially mindful of these possible risks” stated Michelle Patton, Director of Environmental Health Services of the Central Michigan District Health Department. “To ensure our holiday foods are not only delicious, but safe, the following suggestions of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are provided to reduce the risk of the most common foodborne illnesses” stated Director Patton.

**Cooking:** Cook to proper temperatures. Foods are properly cooked when they are heated for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature to kill the harmful microbes that cause foodborne illness. Follow temperature guidelines provided with the food packaging and if in doubt visit [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org) for a handy temperature chart you can use for reference.

**Chilling:** Refrigerate promptly. Public health officials warn people to refrigerate foods quickly because cold temps keep most harmful microbes from growing. Refrigerators should be set at 40 degrees F and the freezer at 0 degrees F.

**Baked goods:** The FDA warns people not to eat uncooked cookie dough, homemade or premixed; or batters made with raw eggs, because raw eggs may contain microbes that can cause illness. Proper cooking kills the microbes that cause illness.

**Eggnog:** Eggnog made with raw eggs also presents disease risk to consumers. While cooking can destroy the disease-causing microbes, people can still get sick when the eggnog is left at
room temperature for several hours before drinking. Other options are pasteurized eggnog brands sold in grocery dairy cases; these should also be kept refrigerated.

**Turkey:** Thawing the turkey fully before cooking is important to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. If a turkey is not fully thawed, the outside of the turkey will be done before the inside, and the inside will not be hot enough to destroy disease-causing microbes. Allow the correct amount of time to fully thaw and cook a whole turkey. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs two to three days to thaw fully when thawed in the refrigerator at a temperature of no more than 40 degrees F. Refer to temperature guidelines for stuffed turkeys which need to be cooked longer. To check a turkey for doneness, insert a food thermometer into the inner thigh area near the breast of the turkey but not touching bone. The turkey is done when the temp reaches 180 degrees F. If the turkey is stuffed, the temp of the stuffing should be 165 degrees F to assure that it is completely cooked and safe to eat.

“Following these simple guidelines will ensure you have a happy and safe holiday season!” says Director Patton.

More information is available by visiting our website at [www.cmdhd.org](http://www.cmdhd.org) or by contacting your local health department.

This article has been brought to you by Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon.

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