

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Food Safety Tips for your Holiday Gathering** *Eat, drink and stay healthy!*

**BLOOMINGTON, IL-** With the holiday season upon us the McLean County Health Department is reminding residents to practice healthy habits when purchasing and preparing food and to pay close attention to simple hygiene practices like handwashing, food storage, and clean-up. Each year an estimated one in six Americans gets food poisoning by consuming contaminated foods or beverages.

The McLean County Health Department offers these suggestions to help prevent foodborne illness:

### **Planning for your feast:**

- Make room for items in your refrigerator and freezer before you go shopping.
- Buy a food thermometer and remember to use it to ensure that all recommended cooking, storing and reheating temperatures are met.
- Keep fresh fruits, vegetables and prepared foods separate from raw meat, seafood and poultry in your shopping cart and grocery bags.
- Refrigerate perishable foods as soon as you get them home from the store, being careful to avoid cross contamination by keeping fresh fruits, vegetables, and prepared foods separate from raw meat, seafood and poultry.
- Thaw frozen turkey in the refrigerator in its original packaging, using the formula four pounds per 24 hours (i.e. and eight pound turkey would need to thaw for 48 hours).

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## Preparing your feast:

- Keep everything in the kitchen clean, including your hands. Frequently wash your hands with hot soapy water and be sure to clean surfaces and utensils between each food-preparation step. Bacteria is often spread on sponges, knives, cutting boards and counter tops.
- Cook turkey breast and stuffing to at least 165° Fahrenheit (F).
- Cook turkey thighs to at least 175° Fahrenheit (F).
- Keep all hot foods above 140° Fahrenheit (F). All cold foods should be refrigerated at 40° Fahrenheit (F) or lower until ready to serve.
- Rinse fresh fruit and vegetables just before serving or consuming unless labeled "ready-to-eat" or "prewashed."

## Ensuring safe leftovers:

- Foods and drinks made with raw products don't make good leftovers. This includes oysters and egg drinks, mousse or bread pudding, unless made with pasteurized eggs or an egg substitute.
- Be sure your refrigerator is set to 40° Fahrenheit (F) or lower and your freezer is set at 0° Fahrenheit (F) to ensure food will be cooled rapidly to safe temperatures.
- Promptly place leftovers in shallow containers and refrigerate immediately; leftovers cool more quickly in shallow containers and prompt refrigeration will help prevent bacteria from multiplying.
- Use your food thermometer to confirm the food is cooled to 40° Fahrenheit (F) or less in less than four hours to prevent the multiplication of bacteria and viruses.
- Reheat leftovers to at least 165° Fahrenheit (F) to prevent cold spots and kill bacteria.
- Eat or freeze gravy within two days.
- Eat or freeze leftovers within three to four days.

The McLean County Health Department wants everyone to stay healthy this holiday season. Remember to clean, separate, cook, and chill and you'll be on your way to having a safe and enjoyable holiday meal.

The McLean County Health Department is dedicated to the prevention and control of disease through health promotion, early intervention and health protection within our county. Follow us on Twitter (@McLeanHealth) and "Like" us on Facebook (Facebook.com/McLeanHealth), for information about public health affecting you.

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