

NEWS RELEASE

November 21, 2022

For Immediate Release

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Thanksgiving Dinner Safety Tips

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) would like to help you celebrate Thanksgiving safely. Food safety specialists recommend taking extra precautions when cooking and handling turkeys due to Salmonella infections being linked to raw turkey products. Salmonella is bacteria that causes diarrhea, fever, and stomach cramps. Most people recover after a few days, but some people may get severely ill and require hospitalization, such as children under 5 and those with a weak immune system.

“Thanksgiving is an important time to reflect on all we are thankful for and to connect with family and friends,” says Sionie Ball, Public Health Nurse at SWNPHD. “Nothing can ruin the holidays quicker than food poisoning so it’s worth a taking a little extra time to be careful.”

Turkey Safety Tips

- **Clean.** Clean often while preparing, cooking, and serving turkey, including washing hands and sanitizing any surfaces and utensils that come into contact with the raw turkey.
- **Separate.** Keep raw turkey separate from fruits and vegetables to avoid cross contamination.
- **Thaw.** Turkeys can be safely thawed in three ways - in the refrigerator, in cold water or in the microwave. It should not be left out on the counter. The safest method is thawing your turkey in the refrigerator, allowing 24 hours of thaw time for every 4-5 pounds of turkey.
- **Do not Rinse.** Rinsing your turkey under a faucet before cooking it does not remove bacteria. It does more harm than good as water can splash from the raw bird to hands, clothes, surrounding surfaces and cooking utensils, increasing the possibility of contamination.
- **Cook.** Always use a food thermometer to make sure your turkey is fully cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Make sure to check your turkey in two separate locations where the meat is thickest.
- **Chill.** Put leftovers away quickly. Make sure the temperature in your refrigerator is set at or below 40F and good air circulation is possible after food is stored. Leftover turkey will only keep for three to four days and should be reheated to a safe internal temperature of 165F.

For more information, contact Sionie Ball at 308-345-4223 or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Call (308) 345-4223; one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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