



FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR HOLIDAYS AND LARGE FAMILY GATHERINGS

Families get sick from meals made at home more often than you think. Whether you are cooking at home or transporting food for a potluck, follow the four simple steps of **clean**, **separate**, **cook** and **chill** to minimize the risk of food-borne illness this holiday season.



Clean: wash hands and surfaces often; wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly

- Bacteria can easily spread throughout the kitchen. Frequent and proper cleaning can prevent this from happening
- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 15 – 20 seconds before and after handling food
- Avoid coughing or sneezing into the air or your hands. Use your sleeve to contain coughs and sneezes. If you accidentally use your hands to cover a cough or sneeze, wash your hands afterwards
- Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and countertops with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food
- Wash all towels used in food preparation in the hot cycle of your washing machine
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables thoroughly under cool running water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. If you use a vegetable brush, make sure it is clean



Separate: don't cross-contaminate

- Cross-contamination is how harmful bacteria spread. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices separate from food that is cooked or ready-to-eat during purchase, transport and storage
- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other food in your shopping cart and grocery bags
- Store raw meat, poultry and seafood on the lowest shelves in your refrigerator to prevent their juices from dripping onto other food
- Use one cutting board for ready-to-eat food and a separate one for raw meat (e.g., poultry, beef and seafood)
- Place cooked food on a clean plate. Never reuse the same plate or cutting board that previously held raw food



Cook: cook food to a safe internal temperature

- Improper cooking of food could mean that harmful bacteria survive and make you sick
- Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill the harmful bacteria. (See Safe Cooking Temperatures)
- Use a probe food thermometer to check the internal temperature of food. This is the only way to tell if the food has reached the proper final cooking temperature. You cannot tell if food is cooked safely by how it looks
- Re-heat leftovers to 74°C (165°F) or higher. Bring gravy to a rolling boil and stir during the re-heating process
- Wash and sanitize your thermometer with soap and hot water after each use



Chill: refrigerate promptly, cool food quickly

- Bacteria multiply fastest at the temperatures between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F), so chilling food properly is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of illness
- Refrigerate or freeze all perishable food within two hours of purchase or preparation. Perishable food left out for more than two hours should be discarded
- Keep the fridge at 4°C (40°F) or below. Use a thermometer inside your fridge to ensure the temperature is correct
- Thaw food in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Food thawed in the microwave should be cooked immediately after being thawed.
- Never thaw food at room temperature
- Cool hot food properly by portioning it into shallow containers before storing it in the refrigerator or freezer
- Refrigerate leftover food as soon as possible and use within two to three days

More holiday food tips:

- Prepare homemade eggnog with pasteurized egg products
- Serve pasteurized ciders or bring unpasteurized cider to a rolling boil before serving
- If you are transporting hot food to a function, ensure it is packed in an insulated container to maintain it at a minimum temperature of 60°C (140°F). Cold foods should be transported in a cooler packed with ice or ice packs to keep the temperature at 4°C (40°F) or colder
- If you are hosting a potluck function, encourage guests that live a fair distance to bring non-perishable items such as bread, beverages, fruit, etc. It is recommended that food served as a hot or cold dish be prepared at the host's home or by a guest that lives very close by

Symptoms of food-borne illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, headache and fever. People who think they are experiencing food-borne illness should seek medical attention.

For more information on food safety at home, contact **York Region Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653 (TTY: 1-866-252-9933) or visit york.ca/foodsafety

PUBLIC HEALTH
1-877-464-9675
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