



Connie Beck, Director
Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

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Keep the holidays happy with food safety

The Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services Division of Environmental Health (DEH) reminds people to prioritize food safety this holiday season.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and California Department of Public Health offer simple tips to help keep you and your friends and family in good health, and free from foodborne illness.

"As we gather together at holiday dinner parties and potlucks, it's important to be conscious of food safety to help ensure a safe meal and good health," said Melissa Martel, director of DEH.

Refrigerate or freeze turkey and other meats and seafood promptly after purchase. Refrigeration temperature should be kept at 41 F or colder.

Keep hands and food contact surfaces clean. Always wash your hands with warm, soapy water before and after handling foods. Thoroughly clean all work surfaces, utensils and dishes with hot, soapy water and rinse with hot water before and after each use.

Wash fruits and vegetables under cool, running water. Even if you plan to peel fruits and veggies, it's important to wash them first because bacteria can spread from the outside to the inside as you cut or peel them. Avoid cross-contamination.

Keep fruits and vegetables away from raw meat, poultry, eggs and fish. Also, keep raw animal products separate from each other. When taste-testing food, ladle a small amount of it into a dish and taste with a clean spoon.

Cook foods to proper temperatures. Set the oven temperature no lower than 325 F and be sure turkey is completely thawed before cooking. Using a food thermometer, make sure that the internal temperature of turkey is at least

165 F at the thickest part of the turkey. Cooking times will vary. For optimal safety, cook stuffing outside turkey in a casserole dish.

Refrigerate leftovers. Turkey and other perishable foods should be refrigerated within two hours after being cooked. Do not eat leftover meat that has been refrigerated for longer than three to four days or eat leftover stuffing or gravy that has been refrigerated for longer than two days.

For more information about food safety, call the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Safe Food Information Line at 888-723-3366 or the U.S. Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Hotline at 888-674-6854. Holiday food safety tips are also available at foodsafety.gov.

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