



Cotton County Health Department

For Immediate Release

November 20, 2015

Contact: Brandie O'Connor, Administrator

580-875-6121

Don't Let Merriment Turn to Misery This Holiday Season: Keep Foodborne Illness Off The Menu

For many, the holiday season brings friends, family, and lots of good food. From cooking the turkey to homemade pies, it is easy to forget safe food handling practices during the hustle and bustle. Every year, approximately 1 in 6 Americans (or 48 million people) become ill with a foodborne illness. The Cotton County Health Department (CCHD) wants to remind everyone that it's important to practice food safety when preparing holiday foods.

CCHD recommends the following food safety tips to prepare your turkey and keep your holiday gatherings free of foodborne illness:

- **Clean:** Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before, during and after handling food. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food.
- **Separate:** Disease-causing germs can spread from raw food (that should be cooked) to other foods. Use separate cutting boards, and keep raw meats and their juices away from fruits and vegetables.
- **Cook:** Always check the internal temperature of cooked meat, poultry and egg dishes with a food thermometer to make sure that the food is cooked to a safe temperature.
- **Chill:** Be safe with leftovers. Refrigerate leftover foods promptly. When foods are left out unrefrigerated, harmful germs multiply quickly. Discard any food left out more than two hours.
- **Ill:** If you have been sick with diarrhea or vomiting, do not prepare food for at least 24 hours after your symptoms have stopped.

Tips for Preparing and Reheating Turkey

Thaw: Allow enough time for a frozen turkey to defrost. Incorrectly thawed turkey can look safe to eat but actually will be undercooked, allowing disease-causing germs to survive inside.

Cook: Use a meat thermometer to be sure that the internal temperature of the turkey is at least 165°F. For stuffed turkeys, the internal temperature of the stuffing must reach 165°F before it is safe to eat; however, the safest way to cook stuffing is to cook in a separate casserole dish.

Store: After the meal, refrigerate remaining foods and leftover turkey within two hours. Eat leftover turkey and stuffing within three to four days, and gravy within one to two days. Reheat leftover gravy to a rolling boil, and thoroughly reheat other leftovers to 165°F.

For other safe holiday food preparation details, please contact the Cotton County Health Department at 580-875-6121 or visit the OSDH Holiday Cooking fact sheet at <http://www.ok.gov/health2/documents/Holiday%20Cooking.pdf>.

-###-