

News Release

December 17, 2024

For Immediate Release

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Food Safety for the Holidays

The holiday season is a wonderful time for gatherings and feasts, but it's important to keep food safety in mind to prevent any foodborne illnesses.

Symptoms of foodborne illness, or food poisoning, can start anywhere from hours to days after the contaminated food or drink is consumed. Typical symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, and flu-like symptoms. In healthy people, the symptoms usually do not last long or require medical treatment. However, they can be severe and life-threatening for older adults, infants and young children, pregnant people and those with underlying medical conditions.

“Everyone can enjoy the holiday season and feasts while keeping foodborne illness at bay by practicing safe food handling and preparation “. says Diana Garcia, Program Manager at SWNPHD.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) would like to ensure your holiday meals are safe and enjoyable by providing you with these tips:

- **Keep Foods Separated:** Always keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from other foods in your grocery cart, refrigerator, and during preparation to avoid cross-contamination.
- **Cook Thoroughly:** Use a food thermometer to ensure that meats are cooked to a safe internal temperature. For example, turkey should reach 165°F in the thickest part of the breast, thigh, and wing.
- **Avoid the Danger Zone:** Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Bacteria can grow rapidly between 40°F and 140°F. Refrigerate perishable foods within two hours, or one hour if the temperature is above 90°F.
- **Thaw Safely:** Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator, in cold water (changing the water every 30 minutes), or in the microwave. Never thaw foods on the counter.
- **Use Pasteurized Eggs:** For dishes that contain raw eggs, such as eggnog or certain desserts, use pasteurized eggs to reduce the risk of Salmonella.
- **Clean Hands and Surfaces:** Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot, soapy water.
- **Handle Leftovers Properly:** Store leftovers in shallow containers and refrigerate them promptly. Use leftovers within three to four days.

By following these tips, you can help ensure that your holiday celebrations are both delicious and safe.

For additional information, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for further details and recent updates. You can also check out our website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

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