

LET'S TALK TURKEY

Food is often a central theme around the Thanksgiving holiday, including pies and turkeys. Unfortunately, busy schedules often lead to shortcuts in the kitchen which can lead to the spread of germs and harmful bacteria. Improper handling, preparation, cooking or storage leads to cross-contamination, the primary cause of food poisoning.

Here are some helpful tips for a “poison-safe” Thanksgiving:

- ❑ Wash your hands before handling any foods.
- ❑ Thawing a turkey at room temperature causes bacteria to grow on defrosted layers which you will then ingest, even after cooking.
- ❑ Thaw a frozen turkey in the refrigerator (40 degrees) which will take one day for every 5 pounds. Fresh or unfrozen turkey should not be in a refrigerator for any more than 2 days. Don't refreeze a thawed turkey.
- ❑ Use a meat thermometer when cooking a turkey and check that the internal temperature reaches 180-185 degrees to be sure it is thoroughly cooked.
- ❑ Wash any utensil or plate used with the raw turkey. Use a clean knife and platter for the cooked turkey to avoid cross-contamination.
- ❑ Stuff turkey immediately before cooking and always remove all stuffing immediately after cooking to avoid bacteria growth. Never store the turkey with stuffing still inside.

Remember:

- ❑ Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold...rotating every 2 hours to avoid food poisoning.
- ❑ Better safe than sorry. Call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-674-6854 for any cooking questions.

