



Grant County Health District – Always Working for a Safer and Healthier Grant County

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A Holiday Food Safety Message from the Grant County Health District

The Washington Department of Health estimates that over 1,000,000 residents of Washington suffer from food poisoning each year. Most of these illnesses are caused by food prepared at home. The Health District urges everyone to observe basic principles of food safety when preparing food during the holidays and throughout the year. You want to remember the special time with family and friends, not the illness that followed.

Preparing your holiday meal.

- Always wash your hands before and after handling raw meats. Use warm water, soap and paper towels. Inadequate hand washing is a leading cause of food related illness.
- Whenever possible avoid direct bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods by using disposable gloves or utensils. A ready-to-eat food is a food that will not be heated again or at all.
- If you are sick, especially with gastrointestinal symptoms, such as diarrhea, avoid contact with food intended for anyone except yourself.
- Cook food to a safe temperature.
 - Poultry products (including stuffing) 165 degrees is the minimum, but 180 degrees is recommended for the meat to be tender.
 - Pork- 160 degrees Fahrenheit (minimum).
 - Ground meat dishes- 160 degrees Fahrenheit (minimum).
 - All other meat products – 145 degrees Fahrenheit (minimum)

These are the safe internal temperatures of the food, not the oven temperature. Use a metal thermometer to make sure the correct temperature is reached.

- Clean and sanitize wiping cloths before each use, especially after cleaning raw meat juice. You can make your own sanitizer by mixing one teaspoon of bleach per one gallon of water.
- Keep raw meat and poultry juices away from other foods. Bag meat separately at the store; keep meat in a water-tight container in the refrigerator at home. Wash and sanitize cutting boards and utensils after using them for raw meat.
- Stuff your bird safely. It is safer to cook the stuffing in a dish rather than in the turkey, but if you do stuff, do it carefully. Stuff the turkey immediately after mixing the ingredients, stuff the turkey loosely, and use a thermometer to make sure the stuffing temperature reaches at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

Serving your holiday meal.

- Do not allow perishable food to sit at room temperature for more than two hours. After two hours, refrigerate, reheat, or throw it away.
- Use small serving trays and refill often. When hosting a holiday meal set out moderate servings of food and refill as needed. This will allow the remainder to be kept at the proper temperature in a refrigerator or oven.
- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
 - Warm food should be served above 140 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - Cold foods should be kept served at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or cooler.

What do with leftovers?

- Refrigerate leftovers immediately. Do not leave food on the counter to “cool down”. Cut large pieces of meat into smaller portions and cool in uncovered containers in the refrigerator. Use shallow containers for other foods and make sure food depth is not over two inches high. Only cover the container after the food is below 41 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Reheat all leftovers (or previously cooked foods) to at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

For more information on food safety visit the web site for the Washington State Department of Health at www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/food/safetytips.html or call the Grant County Health District Food Safety Program at (509) 754-6060.

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