

November 12, 2020

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN CLAY COUNTY WARNS AGAINST LETTING FOODBORNE ILLNESSES RUIN YOUR HOLIDAY SEASON



Contact:

Sydney Marlow
Florida Department of Health in Clay County
904-529-2800

Green Cove Springs – We know that this Holiday season will be different for most of us this year. Although we are all celebrating in different ways, foodborne illness can still be a concern. The Department of Health in Clay County wants to remind residents about the basics of Holiday Food Safety.

1. First, **CLEAN** – wash your hands, utensils and all cooking surfaces before and after food preparation. Especially wash after prepping meat, poultry, eggs or seafood.
2. Next, **COOK** – cook food to the proper internal temperature. Check for doneness with a food thermometer.
3. Then, **CHILL** – refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared food and leftovers within two hours. Do not leave turkey, stuffing or other foods on the table all day long for people to snack on. Be sure to store large quantities in smaller, shallow containers to ensure rapid cooling. Make sure the refrigerator is set at no higher than 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and the freezer is set at zero degrees Fahrenheit. Reheat leftovers to 165 degrees.
4. Finally, **SEPARATE** – do not cross contaminate foods. Keep raw meat, poultry, eggs and seafood and their juices away from ready to eat food.
5. **REMEMBER** – when defrosting turkeys and other foods, the safest thawing method is in the refrigerator at 40 degrees Fahrenheit. A 16 to 20-pound turkey can take 4 to 5 days to thaw in the refrigerator or 8 to 10 hours to thaw in cold running water.

“During the Holiday season, Salmonella cases tend to spike in Clay County. Salmonella infections often cause severe diarrhea, fever and stomach cramps. This illness is often caused by improperly cooked foods and poor hand washing,” stated Heather Huffman, Health Officer and Administrator for the Department of Health in Clay County. “Following the basic Food Safety Tips can help prevent illness and ensure a happy Holiday season for all.”

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