

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DOH-ST. JOHNS COUNTY ENCOURAGES PROPER FOOD SAFETY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON



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ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FL – With planned gatherings and holiday feasts just around the corner, Florida Department of Health in St. Johns County (DOH-St. Johns County) reminds the community to take steps to protect health and to prevent foodborne illness this season through proper food safety practices.

For this Thanksgiving and all holiday celebrations, DOH-St. Johns County reminds residents and visitors of the “4 Steps to Food Safety” to protect health and to prevent foodborne illness:

- **Clean** – Regularly wash hands, utensils, and surfaces before and after food preparation, especially after preparing meat, poultry, eggs, and seafood. Be sure to keep all food-prep work areas clean with hot, soapy water.
- **Separate** – Don’t cross contaminate! Keep raw meats, poultry, eggs, seafood, and all related juices away from prepared and ready-to-eat foods. A cutting board used for meats should not be used for other foods like vegetables, fruits, herbs, and cheeses.
- **Cook** – Cook foods to the proper temperature. Avoid serving any undercooked or spoiled food products. Many food products and recipes call for specific internal cooking temperatures. Do not rely on appearance or touch to determine if food is cooked properly. Use a reliable food-grade thermometer to ensure foods are cooked to the proper temperature. Remember, leftovers should be re-heated the next day to 165° Fahrenheit prior to serving.
- **Chill** – Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods, and leftovers within two hours. Make sure the refrigerator is set no higher than 40° and the freezer is set at 0° Fahrenheit. Remember, food stored at unsafe temperatures (above 41° and below 140° Fahrenheit), can cause bacteria to quickly multiply making food unsafe for human consumption.

Foodborne illnesses can cause severe symptoms, can lead to hospitalization and, in extreme cases, can be fatal. Symptoms of foodborne illness may occur within minutes of consumption and may include nausea, vomiting, or fever. Babies, children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with compromised immune systems are at greater risk for these illnesses; however, anyone who eats improperly handled or undercooked foods is potentially vulnerable.

For more information on how to stay safe from foodborne illness this holiday season, please visit the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/keep-food-safe.html

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