**USDA’s Recommendations for a Safe Thanksgiving**

**WASHINGTON, Nov. 25, 2019** – Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on the things we are most thankful for and to enjoy a delicious meal with loved ones. Some take the lead for meal preparation while others share the responsibility. No matter how your meal comes together, everyone must work together to prevent foodborne illness.

“With large meals come food safety risks, so when I prepare my family’s Thanksgiving dinner, I keep food safety in the forefront,” said Dr. Mindy Brashears, the USDA’s Deputy Under Secretary for Food Safety. “Washing hands properly, keeping the raw turkey away from other ingredients, cooking turkey to a safe internal temperature of 165°F, and promptly refrigerating all of our leftovers within 2 hours after mealtime are all ways we keep our meal safe.” Follow these tips from USDA to ensure a food safe meal this Thanksgiving.

**Tip 1: Wash your hands**

The first step to safe food preparation is always handwashing. Handwashing reduces the risk of foodborne illness and is especially important after handling raw meat, poultry, seafood and egg products. In a recent USDA study, participants shockingly failed to wash their hands sufficiently nearly 100 percent of the time. Follow these five simple steps to wash your hands properly and keep your loved ones safe:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water, turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel.

**Tip 2: Prevent cross-contamination**

Turkeys can be large and hard to handle, which makes the risk of cross-contamination higher during Thanksgiving meal preparation. Turkeys may contain *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*, common pathogens that can cause foodborne illness.  Our recent study found that 60% of sinks were contaminated after handling raw poultry in the sink, so if you handle your turkey in the sink, be sure to fully clean and sanitize your sink and other surfaces after handling your raw turkey and before prepping any other Thanksgiving sides and dishes

To clean surfaces, wash them with soap and warm water to remove dirt and debris. Then use a solution of chlorine bleach or an alcohol-based solution to sanitize. Sanitizing will reduce the number of bacteria present on a surface and ultimately leave your sinks, counters, and other surfaces safe from harmful bacteria.

**Tip 3: Cook the turkey to 165°F**

The only way to kill bacteria is to fully cook your turkey and any other dishes with raw meat, poultry, or egg products. They must be cooked to a safe internal temperature as measured by a food thermometer. To properly take the internal temperature of your turkey, test it in three areas — the thickest part of the breast, the innermost part of the wing, and the innermost part of the thigh. Once all three locations reach 165°F, the bird is safe to eat. If one of those locations does not register at 165°F, then continue cooking until all three locations reach the correct internal temperature.

**Tip 4: Follow the two-hour rule**

It’s tempting to go back for seconds (or even thirds), but perishable foods are only safe out on the table or buffet for two hours. After two hours, food will be in the Danger Zone, temperatures between 40-140°F, where bacteria can rapidly multiply and cause the food to become unsafe. Make sure all leftovers are placed in the refrigerator within two hours to safely enjoy them later. Put them in small, shallow containers. If foods have been left out for more than two hours, they should be discarded.

**Tip 5: Ask your questions!**

If you have any questions this Thanksgiving, you can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) to talk to a food safety expert or chat live at [ask.usda.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fask.usda.gov%2Fs%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C752809ec7b434dd6729408d76841412c%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637092501784996680&sdata=tDQWOc5lZWt1c33WERG34j1Fjg08kG%2FIpSRPnS%2F1Q9I%3D&reserved=0) from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. If you need help on Thanksgiving Day, the Meat and Poultry Hotline is available from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern Time.

You can also visit [FoodSafety.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.foodsafety.gov%2Fkeep%2Ftypes%2Fturkey%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C752809ec7b434dd6729408d76841412c%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637092501785006677&sdata=yFXNPto%2BNta9M3%2Bmz%2FC9p6SVURBQa%2BWhPw7UD7Uykdc%3D&reserved=0) to learn more about how to safely select, thaw and prepare a turkey. For more Thanksgiving food safety tips, follow FSIS on Twitter [@USDAFoodSafety](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FUSDAFoodSafety&data=02%7C01%7C%7C752809ec7b434dd6729408d76841412c%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637092501785016669&sdata=4GXMBCGt1xpxHFYlVRaLIbL%2Fhqw9A3usZyN7dgLcPB0%3D&reserved=0) or on Facebook at [Facebook.com/FoodSafety.gov](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FFoodSafety.gov&data=02%7C01%7C%7C752809ec7b434dd6729408d76841412c%7Ced5b36e701ee4ebc867ee03cfa0d4697%7C0%7C0%7C637092501785016669&sdata=pKG5JjmlU7WKPDDeRf6UpTGHv9hCTxbmBAeAnbNkMFs%3D&reserved=0). Happy holidays!

###

NOTE: Access news releases and other information at FSIS’ website at <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/newsroom>.

Follow FSIS on Twitter at [twitter.com/usdafoodsafety](http://twitter.com/usdafoodsafety) or in Spanish at: [twitter.com/usdafoodsafe\_es](http://twitter.com/usdafoodsafe_es).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice), or (202) 720-6382 (TDD).