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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN WALTON ENCOURAGES FOOD SAFETY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON TO PREVENT FOODBORNE ILLNESSES



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DeFuniak Springs, Fla.—As you gather around the table with family and friends to share a meal and celebrate the holidays, the Florida Department of Health in Walton reminds you to practice food safety to ensure a safe and healthy holiday season for everyone. Foodborne illnesses affect one in six people each year in the United States, but it is easily preventable.

“There is a lot of work that goes into preparing a holiday meal, and we want to ensure that your holidays are filled with nothing but health and happiness”, said DOH-Walton Health Office Holly Holt.

The department recommends following these key steps to prevent foodborne illness during the holidays and year-round.

- Do not prepare food for others if you have diarrhea or vomiting;
- Keep your refrigerator below 40°F and refrigerate perishable items;
- When transporting food to another location, keep it cold to minimize bacterial growth;
- Pack food directly from the refrigerator into the cooler immediately before leaving home;
- Make sure your cooking area is clean: wash hands, cutting boards, utensils and countertops often;
- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food;
- Separate raw meats from other foods;
- Use a food thermometer to ensure that foods are cooked to a safe internal temperature;
- After everyone has enjoyed the meal, divide all remaining leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator within two hours of the meal;
- Perishable food items that have been left out of the refrigerator for longer than two hours should be discarded; and
- Reheat holiday leftovers to 165°F and allow dishes to sit for a few minutes afterwards so the heat can kill any bacteria.

For more information on how to keep your family safe from foodborne-illness this holiday season, visit <http://www.foodsafety.gov/>.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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