



## NEWS RELEASE

### Public Health

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## Tips for a safe Thanksgiving meal

Thanksgiving is just around the corner to jump start the holiday season. It's the time of the year when friends and family are together to give thanks for their good fortunes and to enjoy a delicious Thanksgiving meal. Whether you are preparing the feast yourself or helping out in the kitchen, be sure to follow these helpful tips to prepare a safe Thanksgiving dinner for your loved ones—they'll be thankful they did not get a foodborne illness.

**Handling and Thawing**—Always wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling the raw turkey. Fresh turkeys need no thawing and are ready to cook. Frozen turkeys can be purchased weeks in advance, but can require several days to thaw before cooking. If you are planning on purchasing a frozen turkey, first make sure there is sufficient space in your freezer for storage.

- Never defrost the turkey on the counter! The safest way to thaw a turkey is in the refrigerator. When you are ready to thaw the turkey, make enough room for it in your refrigerator.
- Leave the turkey in the original packaging and place in a shallow pan and allow refrigerator thawing time at a rate of 4 to 5 pounds per 24 hours.

**Time to Cook**—Cook the turkey immediately after it is thawed. Do not refreeze. If you purchase a fresh turkey, cook it within a day or two of purchase.

- Insert a meat thermometer into the thickest part of the thigh, not touching any bone, and cook to a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees.
- Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing, and the thickest part of the breast as well.
- Cook stuffing separately in a casserole pan to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees or higher. If you cook stuffing in the turkey, ensure the turkey and stuffing both reach 165 degrees or higher.

**Storing Leftovers Safely**—Within two hours of taking the turkey out of the oven, store leftover turkey in shallow containers and put them in the refrigerator or freezer.

- Use cooked leftover turkey, stuffing and gravy within **3 to 4 days**.
- When using leftovers, reheat the foods thoroughly to 165 degrees and bring gravy to a boil before serving.

For more information on food safety contact San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health Services at (800) 442-2283 or visit our website at [www.sbcounty.gov/dph/dehs](http://www.sbcounty.gov/dph/dehs).

