



Fact Sheet

FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

What is foodborne illness?

Food contaminated by bacteria, viruses and parasites can make you sick. Many people have had foodborne illness and not even known it. It's sometimes called food poisoning, and it can feel like the flu. Symptoms may include the following:

- stomach cramps
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- fever

Symptoms can start soon after eating contaminated food, but they can hit up to a month or more later. For some people, especially young children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems, foodborne illness can be very dangerous.

Health Canada estimates that there are as many as 13 million cases of foodborne illness in Canada every year. Most cases of foodborne illness can be prevented by using safe food handling practices and using a food thermometer to check that your food is cooked to a safe internal temperature!

It's always important to keep foods out of the danger zone, which is between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F) to prevent the growth of harmful bacteria. To do this, just keep hot foods hot, at least 60°C (140°F) and keep cold foods cold at 4°C (40°F) or lower.

Preparing and serving holiday buffets

- Do not let foods linger during preparation, cook them thoroughly and serve them promptly. Keep hot foods hot with warming trays, chafing dishes or crock pots. Keep cold foods cold by placing serving dishes on crushed ice.
- Remember the **“2-hour rule”** especially when entertaining with a large meal or buffet. Don't let perishable foods linger for longer than two hours in the danger zone.
- Keep replacement dishes of food hot e.g. in the oven or a pot or cold e.g. in the refrigerator or a cooler during the buffet.

- Do not add new food to a serving dish that has been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours. Remember to change serving utensils as well.
- Provide serving spoons and tongs for every dish served. Even finger foods, such as cut vegetables, candies, chips/nachos and nuts, should have serving implements to prevent contamination between guests.

Traveling with food

- Wrap hot food in foil and heavy towels, or carry in insulated containers to maintain a temperature of at least 60°C (140°F).
- Store cold foods in a cooler with ice/freezer packs to maintain the temperature at 4°C (40°F) or below. Full coolers keep their temperature better than partially full ones, so add extra insulation to take up unoccupied space. This will also prevent containers from sliding, falling over and leaking.

Vegetables, herbs and other foods stored in oil

(e.g. basil or other herbs in oil, garlic, mushrooms, sundried tomatoes, peppers in oil and also pesto or antipasto) Be sure to carefully store foods in oil to prevent harmful toxins that cause serious illness.

- Home-prepared products in oil can be made safely only by adding *dehydrated* ingredients to oil. These products can be kept at room temperature. Dehydrated ingredients include ingredients that are very dry and can be kept at room temperature without spoiling, e.g. dried herbs and spices, dry-packed sundried tomatoes, etc.
- If home-prepared products in oil are made using *fresh* or *frozen* ingredients, e.g. fresh basil, peppers, mushrooms or garlic, they should be kept refrigerated at all times and must be discarded after one week unless properly acidified. These products may be safely frozen for longer storage. Thaw frozen products in the refrigerator. After the products have thawed, they should be kept refrigerated at all times and must be discarded after one week unless refrozen.
- Consumers who purchase products made with *fresh* ingredients from fairs or farmer's markets or receive them as gifts should check that they were constantly refrigerated after they were prepared, and when they were prepared. Discard them if they are more than one week old.
- Commercially-prepared products in oil that contain an acid (such as vinegar) or salt in their list of ingredients are generally considered to be safe. Store them in the refrigerator after opening and between each use. Contact the manufacturer if you have questions about a particular product.

Eggnog and other recipes with raw or lightly cooked eggs

- Be sure to handle and prepare these tasty treats safely. Commercial, ready-made eggnog is prepared using pasteurized eggs and does not require heating. Homemade eggnog may contain harmful bacteria if not prepared properly. Prepare homemade eggnog using pasteurized egg products, found in most grocery stores.

- If you choose to make eggnog with whole eggs, be sure to heat the egg-milk mixture to at least 71°C (160°F). Refrigerate promptly, once steaming stops, dividing large amounts into shallow containers so that it cools quickly.
- Precautions should also be taken with sauces, mousses, and any other recipes calling for raw or lightly-cooked eggs. Use pasteurized egg products, or bring egg-mixtures to a uniform temperature of 71°C (160°F).
- All of these foods must be stored in the refrigerator.

Cider

- Popular holiday beverages, such as unpasteurized apple cider and other drinks made from unpasteurized apple cider may pose a safety risk since they may contain harmful bacteria.
- Serve pasteurized ciders or bring unpasteurized cider to a rolling boil before serving. This is especially important when serving cider to children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems.

Leftovers: Storage and Reheating

- While it is tempting to leave turkey and other foods at room temperature for snacking after a meal, you should refrigerate all leftovers promptly in uncovered, shallow containers so they cool quickly. Refrigerate once steaming stops and leave the lid or wrap loosely until the food is cooled to refrigeration temperature. Avoid overstocking the refrigerator to allow cool air to circulate freely.
- Store turkey meat separately from stuffing and gravy.
- Reheat solid leftovers to at least 74°C (165°F). Bring gravy to a full, rolling boil and stir during the process.
- Use leftover turkey meat, bones, stuffing, gravy and other cooked dishes within four days for best quality or freeze for later use.

Safeguarding Canada's Food Supply

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is the Government of Canada's key science-based regulator for animal health, plant protection and, in partnership with Health Canada, food safety. At the CFIA, the safety of Canada's food supply is central to everything we do.

For more information on food safety, visit the CFIA Web site at www.inspection.gc.ca. You can also find food safety information on the Health Canada and Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education Web sites respectively at www.hc-sc.gc.ca and www.canfightbac.org.

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Food Thermometer Food Safety Tips *Preventing foodborne illness*

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Health Canada estimates that there are as many as 13 million cases of foodborne illness in Canada every year. Most cases of foodborne illness can be prevented by using safe food handling practices and using a food thermometer to check that your food is cooked to a safe internal temperature!

Why should I use a food thermometer?

The answer is simple: for your safety and the safety of those you prepare food for. By cooking food to a safe internal temperature, you can destroy harmful bacteria. Most of us have years of experience in the kitchen, but some of the old methods and myths are not reliable.

Using a food thermometer lets you check the inside temperature of the food to find out if it is cooked to a safe temperature. Help prevent foodborne illness by always using a food thermometer.

Myth-Buster #1:

Can I tell if meat is cooked by cutting it open and looking at it?

No, you can't. The only way to be sure that food is cooked to a safe internal temperature is to use a food thermometer.

Research has shown that the inside colour of a hamburger and its juices are **not** reliable indicators of how well the burger is cooked. Sometimes previously frozen ground beef turns brown before it reaches a temperature high enough to kill harmful *E. coli* bacteria.

Foodsafe tip: Check the internal temperature of your hamburger patty and all food made with ground beef, even spaghetti sauce. If it is 71°C (160°F), it's safe to eat. Remember . . . *it's not done until it's 71°C (160°F)!*

Myth-Buster #2:

Do I have to overcook all my food to make it safe to eat?

Absolutely not! Using a food thermometer can make you a better and safer cook! Cooking your food to a safe internal temperature will kill harmful bacteria. It also helps you cook to just the right temperature to prevent overcooking.

Foodsafe tip: Cooking a chicken? A turkey? For maximum safety, food safety experts recommend cooking the stuffing in a separate dish. Why? It takes longer for both the stuffing and the meat to reach a safe internal temperature, so why not cook unstuffed and save time? Stuffing and meat must each reach separate safe internal temperatures. See table.

Myth-Buster #3:

Do I have to check the internal temperature of every ground beef patty?

Yes – but it's easy. Buy an instant-read digital food thermometer. When you think the food is almost done, take it away from the heat using a clean utensil and surface and take the temperature according to the manufacturer's instructions, typically by inserting the food thermometer into the thickest part of the food. If the burgers aren't done, cook them longer and check the temperature again.

Foodsafe Tip: Wash the thermometer's stem and any other utensils you have used with soap and hot water after every use. Why? Because you can also contaminate other foods if you haven't washed the thermometer after being in contact with raw, undercooked or fully cooked meat juices.

INTERNAL COOKING TEMPERATURES

You can't tell by looking. Use a digital food thermometer to be sure!
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FOOD	TEMPERATURE
Beef, veal and lamb (pieces and whole cuts) <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ medium-rare❖ medium❖ well done	63°C (145°F) 71°C (160°F) 77°C (170°F)
Pork (pieces and whole cuts)	71°C (160°F)
Poultry (e.g. chicken, turkey, duck) <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ pieces❖ whole	74°C (165°F) 85°C (185°F)
Ground meat and meat mixtures (e.g. burgers, sausages, meatballs, meatloaf, casseroles) <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ beef, veal, lamb and pork❖ poultry	71°C (160°F) 74°C (165°F)
Egg dishes	74°C (165°F)
Others (hot dogs, stuffing and leftovers)	74°C (165°F)

The safe cook's guide to food thermometers

Food safety experts recommend using a food thermometer that gives an actual temperature reading, not just a range. Oven-safe thermometers stay in the food while it cooks. The instant-read type is used when you think the food is done.

Read the manufacturer's instructions carefully! For most thermometers, simply insert it into the thickest part of the food, away from fat, bone or gristle. Food is ready to eat when it has reached the proper internal temperature. See table.

Digital instant-read thermometers read quickly. The thermometer works well in both thin and thick food – just insert it near the end of cooking time.

Digital instant-read thermometer-fork combinations can also be read quickly. The fork sensor needs to be fully inserted into the thickest part of the food.

Dial oven-safe thermometers are for thicker foods, like roasts and casseroles, not for thin food. They can stay in the food while it's cooking in the oven or barbecue.

Disposable temperature indicators are for one-time use with specific foods. Temperature-sensitive material changes colour when the proper temperature is reached.

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For more information on food safety or to order free copies of this brochure, visit the CFIA website at www.inspection.gc.ca or call 1-800-442-2342/TTY 1-800-465-7735 (8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday to Friday). You can also find food safety information on the Health Canada and Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education websites respectively at www.hc-sc.gc.ca and www.canfightbac.org.

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