

Holiday meal food safety

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A recent foodborne illness outbreak in Kansas affecting 159 people has been linked to a turkey dinner served at a church function. Symptoms included vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal cramps -- a holiday treat. No specific food source has been identified yet.

Holiday meals have been linked to outbreaks of many pathogens including *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *Clostridium perfringens* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. Cooking for a crowd larger than normal, whether in the home or in a community kitchen, can lead to mistakes at the expense of food safety.



What you can do



Clean and sanitize utensils and work surfaces after preparing raw turkey for roasting. Wash your hands after handling raw meat or poultry. Don't wash your turkey. Recent research has shown that when washing poultry, the pathogens can be spread within 3 ft of the sink, which might include already prepared fixins.



Color is not an indicator of safety or doneness. Often there are suggestions in recipes about turkey being done when "the juices run clear." That's a myth. The only way to know whether the turkey is done is with a tip-sensitive digital thermometer reading at least 165°F. Stick it in multiple spots but be sure the thermometer doesn't touch the bone as it conducts and may give a wrong temperature reading.



Refrigerate leftover turkey within 2 hours of taking it out of the oven. Turkey should be cooled to 41°F quickly. This is best accomplished by placing sliced leftover turkey in resealable bags of 1 quart or smaller size. Bags should be laid flat in the refrigerator to allow cool air to circulate. Some spore-forming bacteria will grow and form toxins if kept at room temperature too long.

