



CITY OF COLUMBIA/BOONE
COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Holiday Season Prompts Food Safety Reminder

COLUMBIA, MO- With holiday season fast approaching, the Columbia/Boone County Health Department would like to remind the community of safe food preparation for family gatherings.

Every year an estimate 76 million cases of foodborne diseases occurs in the United States. While the majority of these cases, are mild and cause symptoms for only a couple of days, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that there are 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths related to foodborne diseases each year.

Foodborne diseases are caused by consuming contaminated foods or beverages. There are over 250 known foodborne diseases that are caused by a variety of bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Those most vulnerable to these illnesses are children, seniors, pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system. There is not a specific set of symptoms however nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps and diarrhea are often present.

When preparing holiday feasts, there are some simple precautions that consumers can use to reduce the risk:

- **Clean:** Wash hands and surfaces often. Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and infect cutting boards, knives, sponges, and counter tops.
- **Separate:** Don't cross-contaminate by keeping raw meats, poultry and seafood away from other foods that are ready-to-eat.
- **Cook:** Properly cooking foods for a long enough time and at a high enough temperature, kills the harmful bacteria. A whole turkey is safely cooked when the internal temperature is 165°F throughout. Also remember that those most eager to sample raw cookie dough are often the most vulnerable – kids.
- **Chill:** Any perishable food on the buffet table should be discarded after two hours at room temperatures. Leftover turkey should be cut into small pieces and placed in the refrigerator immediately. To keep harmful bacteria from growing and multiplying, refrigerators should be set at 41°F or less.

At the Columbia/Boone County Health Department, we perform routine monitoring of foodborne illnesses through surveillance. Please report suspected illnesses to the Columbia/Boone County Health Department through the website at www.gocolumbiamo.com. Often reports from concerned citizens are how outbreaks are first detected. This holiday season by preparing your food properly, you can ensure a safe, happy and enjoyable time of year.

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