



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Contact:

Nicole Kragness, RS  
Regulation & Licensing Division Manager  
715-839-4718  
[nicole.kragness@eauclairecounty.gov](mailto:nicole.kragness@eauclairecounty.gov)

## Don't let your Thanksgiving turkey bite you back!

**Eau Claire – November 26, 2024** –It's Thanksgiving week, and you (or someone you know) may be cooking a turkey for the very first time. It's important to know how to properly cook a turkey – one in six people in the United States will get sick from a foodborne illness this year.

“Not handling your holiday food safely or undercooking your turkey can lead to serious foodborne illness,” says Iris Casey, Environmental Health Specialist with the Health Department.

### Keep these tips in mind to make sure you and your loved ones stay healthy this Thanksgiving:

- **A frozen turkey can be safely thawed in the refrigerator or in cold water.** When thawing in a refrigerator at 40 degrees F or below, allow roughly 24 hours for every 4 to 5 pounds. When thawing in cold water, allow roughly 30 minutes per pound. Submerge the wrapped turkey into the cold water and change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is fully thawed. Once thawed, cook the turkey immediately.
- **Keep the turkey and its juices separate from foods that won't be cooked,** and fully clean and sanitize surfaces that come into contact with the turkey and its juices. A USDA study found that about [30% of consumers](#) didn't successfully clean and sanitize kitchen surfaces around meal preparation.
- **Washing a turkey is risky** – it can spread bacteria to your sink and other nearby surfaces. If you choose to wash your turkey, [fully clean surfaces](#) with soap and water afterwards using a solution of 1 teaspoon of bleach per 1 cup of water.
- **To be safe to eat, your turkey needs to reach at least 165 degrees F,** as measured by a food thermometer, in three places – the thickest part of the breast, the innermost part of the thigh, and the innermost part of the wing. Always use a thermometer to check your turkey's temperature, even if the turkey has a pop-up temperature indicator.
- **When serving food to groups of people, remember the two-hour rule.** Perishable foods that have sat out at room temperature for more than two hours are unsafe due to possible growth of bacteria, and should be discarded.

If you have food safety questions this Thanksgiving, you can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854), email [MPHotline@usda.gov](mailto:MPHotline@usda.gov) or chat live at [www.ask.usda.gov](http://www.ask.usda.gov) from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday to reach a food safety specialist in English or Spanish.



# LET'S TALK TURKEY

Unsafe handling and under-cooking your holiday bird can cause foodborne illnesses. Here are a few tips from the USDA to keep your Thanksgiving safe and delicious!

Types of turkeys regulated by the USDA:



\*For more information about each type of turkey, visit [fsis.usda.gov](http://fsis.usda.gov).

## 3 WAYS TO THAW

While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely. As soon as it begins to thaw, bacteria that may have been present before freezing will begin to grow again. Here are three ways to safely thaw your bird:



**Refrigerator:**  
Safe to store the turkey for another 1 – 2 days in the refrigerator.

This is the USDA recommended thawing method.

**How to thaw:**  
Allow approximately 24 hrs. for every 4-5lbs of bird.

**Cold water:**  
Cook immediately after thawing.

**How to thaw:**  
Submerge the bird in cold water & change every 30 mins.



**Microwave:**  
Cook immediately after thawing.



**How to thaw:**  
Use defrost function based on weight

For more information on safe thawing methods, visit [fsis.usda.gov](http://fsis.usda.gov)

### DID YOU KNOW?



It's safe to cook a frozen turkey though cooking time will be 50% longer!

## Clean

Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water.

Utensils  
Plates  
Countertops  
Cutting boards

SHOULD ALSO BE WASHED

Bacteria, which can be present inside and outside a turkey, can't be washed off the bird! Cooking is the only way to destroy this potentially dangerous bacteria.

### SO DON'T WASH YOUR TURKEY!!

## SEPARATE

Separate raw turkey from fresh food, and use separate cutting boards, plates, and utensils.

Keep dishes that touch raw food separate, too!

Wash items that touch raw meat with soap and warm water.

## COOK

Your bird is not safe until it reaches 165 °F — you cannot tell by the color.

Remember to ensure any stuffing cooked with the bird reaches 165 °F, too!

Use three places to check the temperature.

Thickest part of breast  
Innermost part of wing  
Innermost part of thigh

When turkey is removed from the oven, let it stand 20 minutes before carving to allow juices to settle.

## CHILL

Take your time around the dinner table, but refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours!

Safe in fridge 3-4 days

Safe frozen, but use within 2-6 months for best quality.

Last day Thanksgiving leftovers are safe from the fridge.

Leftover turkey should be cut into smaller pieces, and store items separately in smaller containers.

Be sure to pack leftovers in a cooler if traveling.

Reheat thoroughly to a temperature of 165 °F.

Remember, bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses can't be smelled or tasted!

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
Visit [foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov)

If you have a specific question, call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHOTLINE or visit [AskKaren.gov](http://AskKaren.gov). Visit [PregunteleaKaren.gov](http://PregunteleaKaren.gov) for questions in Spanish.

