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Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Follow Four Steps to Food Safety, Even During Holidays

**DUPAGE COUNTY**—As the holiday season approaches, it's likely there are multiple meals and parties in your future. Carrying food from one location to another and sharing dishes with a crowd means more opportunities for bacteria to grow and cause food poisoning.

The DuPage County Health Department reminds you to follow four food safety tips to ensure a healthy and safe holiday: Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill.

**Clean.** Because bacteria can spread throughout a kitchen and get on your hands, cutting boards, knives, utensils and countertops, wash hands and surfaces often.

- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food. Wash cutting boards, dishes, utensils and counter tops with hot soapy water after preparing each food item and before you go on to the next food.
- Consider using paper towels to clean kitchen surfaces. If you use cloth towels, wash them often in the hot cycle of your washing machine.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables, such as oranges, lemons and limes under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables, such as apples and tomatoes, under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.

**Separate.** Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.

- Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate one for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- Separate raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs from other foods in your grocery shopping cart, grocery bags and in your refrigerator.
- Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs.

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**Cook.** Even for the experienced chef and cook, improper heating and preparation of food means bacteria can survive.

- Use a food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked foods. Color is not a reliable indicator of doneness.
- Make sure that meat, poultry, egg dishes, casseroles and other foods are cooked to proper internal temperatures, ground meat to 160°F and ground poultry to 165°F.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. Only use recipes in which eggs are cooked or heated thoroughly.
- Bring sauces, soups and gravy to a boil when reheating.

**Chill.** Bacteria spreads fastest at temperatures between 40 and 140 degrees, so chilling food properly is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Keep the fridge at 40°F or below and use an appliance thermometer to check the temperature.

- Chill leftovers and takeout foods within 2 hours.
- Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs and other perishables as soon as you get them home from the store.
- Never defrost food at room temperature. Food must be kept at a safe temperature during thawing.
- There are three safe ways to defrost food: in the refrigerator, in cold water, and in the microwave. Food thawed in cold water or in the microwave should be cooked immediately.

For more food safety information, visit: [Food Safety Tips](#) on the DuPage County Health Department's website.

For more about food safety, visit: Fight Bac! The Partnership for Food Safety Education at [fightbac.org](http://fightbac.org).

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