

News Release

December 16, 2025

For Immediate Release

Contact: Melissa Propp RN, 308-345-4223

Food Safety for Holiday Feasts

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has a few recommendations on food safety to help make this year's holiday feasts safe and enjoyable. Last year nearly half of all the disease cases (excluding COVID-19) investigated by SWNPHD between Thanksgiving and New Year were stomach bugs from food poisoning or other sources.

“The germs that cause food poisoning are definitely around this time of year,” explains Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. “Imagine the turkey covered in glitter. If you touched it and then didn’t wash your hands, you would spread glitter to everything else you touch. Germs work the same way; we just can’t see them.”

Everyone can take simple safety steps to make sure the food they share is safe to eat and will not make anyone sick, and it starts with washing your hands often while preparing food.

- Keep foods separate, especially raw meat. Anything that touches raw meat shouldn’t touch any other food, including the cooked meat once it is done.
- If you use ready-to-cook foods, like pre-made cookie dough, follow the package directions carefully. Eating them right out of the package without cooking them can make you sick.
- Cook food to the right temperature. You can’t tell it’s done by how it looks, so use a food thermometer to be sure it is hot enough to kill all the germs. You can find a chart of safe cooking temperatures at [foodsafety.gov](https://www.foodsafety.gov).
- Keep cold food cold (40°) and hot food hot (140°). If you bring food along when traveling to a get-together, make sure you can keep it at a safe temperature or choose dishes that are safe at room temperature.
- Keep an eye on the clock. Do you use a timer for how long to cook things? You can use a timer for how long food can stay out too. Get leftovers in the fridge within 2 hours, then eat them within 3 to 4 days.

With so many foods being cooked or prepared at the same time, it can be easy to mix things up. If you do get food poisoning, the symptoms like vomiting and diarrhea usually get better on their own. However, some people may get dehydrated and need to see a doctor, especially if they are babies, young children, pregnant women, or older adults.

For more information about food safety, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube or visit [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov).

###

YOUR MAP TO A FOOD-SAFE HOLIDAY

Follow some simple food safety advice to keep you and your guests feeling festive this winter.

PROPER PREPPING

Just as you have a procedure for storing your holiday gifts when you get home, you should have a system for storing your food.

Make sure your fridge is set at or below **40 °F**. Chill perishable groceries within two hours of shopping.

Store raw meats in a container or dish to prevent juices from leaking and set below ready-to-eat foods.

Wash your hands for **20 SECONDS** with warm water and soap!

Be sure to separate raw meat from ready-to-eat foods and dishes.

Don't forget: You need two thermometers.

One for the fridge to ensure food is stored at 40 °F.

One for food, particularly meat, to ensure it's cooked to the right temperature.

WELCOME TO Roostville

Always use a food thermometer to check that different holiday meats have been cooked to the right internal temperature.

- GROUND BEEF 160 °F
- DUCK 165 °F
- TURKEY 165 °F
- GOOSE 165 °F
- VEAL* 145 °F
- PORK* 145 °F
- LAMB* 145 °F
- STEAK* 145 °F

YIELD

*Don't forget resting time! Beef, veal, lamb, and pork should rest for **3 MINUTES** before carving or consuming.

HITTING THE ROAD

If you're bringing a dish to a get-together with coworkers, family or friends this holiday season, make sure you are transporting food safely.

40 °F

140 °F

DANGER ZONE



Perishable food kept in the Danger Zone (between 40 - 140 °F) for longer than 2 hours should be thrown out.

140 °F + 40 °F = 2 hours

KEEP COLD FOOD COLD

When transporting cold dishes, place items in a cooler with ice or gel packs to keep food at or below **40 °F**

KEEP HOT FOOD HOT

Keep hot foods at or above **140 °F** by wrapping dishes in insulation bags or towels and newspaper.

EXCEPTIONS

to Danger Zone include ready-to-eat items like cookies, crackers, bread, whole fruit.



For more food safety tips, go to FoodSafety.gov