



Is It Done Yet? You Can't Tell by Looking

Use a food thermometer this Thanksgiving

For Immediate Release
Nov. 20, 2012

Media Contact:
Vermont Department of Health
Communication Office
802-863-7281

BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Health advised cooks this Thanksgiving to rethink “*I can tell if it's done just by looking.*”

“You can't tell by looking,” said Elisabeth Wirsing, food and lodging chief. “Use a food thermometer to be sure. If you get the question, ‘Is it done yet?’ the answer should be decided after pushing the thermometer down into the thickest, meatiest part of the bird. The magic number for a safe internal temperature is at least 165 degrees.”



Turkey can be high risk for foodborne illness. Family, football games and other distractions can also pressure cooks and the cleanup crew to delay storing leftovers properly, and thoroughly wiping down surfaces where the bird was prepared.

To prevent Foodborne Illness:

Keep It Clean

Wash your hands before and after handling raw foods, and wash towels, sponges, and dish cloths often to prevent bacteria from growing. Also wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly.

Don't Cross-Contaminate

Keep raw meat, poultry, fish and their juices away from other foods. Wash your cutting board, and knives in hot soapy water after cutting raw turkey and before cutting up other ingredients. Use separate cutting boards for meats and vegetables.

Cook to Temperature

For whole turkeys, cook until the meat thermometer reads at least 165°F throughout the entire bird and stuffing. Turkey livers and other innards should also be cooked to at least 165°F. Bacteria can survive in poultry or stuffing that has not reached this temperature, and could cause illness like salmonella. Re-heat leftovers to 165°F. Gravy and side dishes can be sources of illness as well, so pay attention to cooking all foods properly.

Keep Leftovers Cold

It's best to refrigerate leftovers right away – never leave them out for more than two hours. Place leftovers in shallow storage containers to refrigerate (40°F) or freeze (0°F). After cooking, remove stuffing from poultry or other meat and refrigerate stuffing and meat separately.

About Defrosting

Never defrost food at room temperature. Defrosting turkeys and other large, frozen meats is especially challenging for cooks. To defrost in the refrigerator, allow 24 hours for each 5 lbs. of meat. Be sure to place a plate or container under the meat while it is defrosting, so that the juices won't contaminate other foods, and put the plate on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator.

If you need to defrost more quickly, you can use cold water. Keep the meat in its unopened wrapper and cover with cold water in a container or sink. Change the water every 30 minutes to keep the surface cold. The estimated thawing time is 30 minutes per 1 lb. of meat.

For more information on “Safe Food Handling for a Healthy Holiday” visit the Health Department website at Healthvermont.gov.

Follow the Health Department on [Twitter](#) and join us on [Facebook](#) for up-to-date news, alerts and health information.

###

Vermont Department of Health | 108 Cherry Street | Burlington, VT 05402
Voice: 802-863-7200 | In Vermont 800-464-4343 | Fax: 802-865-7754 | TTY/TDD: Dial 711 first
Health Care Provider Infectious Disease Reporting: 802-863-7240 or 800-640-4374
||| | [Web Browser](#)