



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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### OKALOOSA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT REMINDS RESIDENTS OF FOOD SAFETY TIPS

OKALOOSA COUNTY– With an estimated 76 million Americans contracting food borne illness each year, the Okaloosa County Health Department emphasizes the importance of safe food preparation and storage this holiday season. Young children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems are the most vulnerable for contracting such illness. Dr. Karen Chapman, Director at the Okaloosa County Health Department, reminds residents that a little bit of extra care in the kitchen can go a long way this holiday season. “Remember these simple steps, and you can enjoy a safe and healthy holiday meal.”

Proper food handling and cooking can reduce the risk of foodborne illnesses. **Reduce the risk by following these tips:**

- **DO** wash your hands and fingernails properly *before* preparing food *and after* contact with raw meat, seafood, poultry and eggs.
- **DO** clean and sanitize all cooking equipment, countertops, and serving areas.
- **DO** keep uncooked meats away from other foods to avoid cross contamination (ex: don't let raw meat juices come in contact with salads and vegetables)
- **DO** cook food thoroughly. An 8-12 pound unstuffed turkey should be cooked for 2-3 hours. Every part of a turkey should reach a minimum internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- **DO** keep frozen turkeys frozen until ready to thaw, prior to cooking. Never defrost the bird at room temperature as bacteria can rapidly grow on raw meat at room temperature.
- **DO** carefully store leftovers. They should be refrigerated promptly and should sit out no more than two hours after coming out of the oven. Slice the turkey before refrigerating it, as whole turkeys do not store safely in the refrigerator.
- **DO** use safe refrigeration and hot holding temperatures. Safe refrigeration is less than 41 degrees Fahrenheit, and safe hot holding is greater than 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

In addition, individuals with liver disease, diabetes, who have had gastric surgery or otherwise have an immune-compromised system, should **avoid** eating raw oysters or other raw animal protein. Oysters that are thoroughly cooked or have been post-harvest treated can be consumed by people with these conditions to minimize the risk of infection from *Vibrio vulnificus*.

The Department of Health promotes, protects and improves the health of all people in Florida. For more information about food safety, visit [www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/food](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/food).

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