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# Fact Sheet

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## FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

### What is foodborne illness?

Food contaminated by bacteria, viruses and parasites can make you sick. Many people have had foodborne illness and not even known it. It's sometimes called food poisoning, and it can feel like the flu. Symptoms may include the following:

- stomach cramps
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea
- fever

Symptoms can start soon after eating contaminated food, but they can hit up to a month or more later. For some people, especially young children, the elderly, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems, foodborne illness can be very dangerous.

Public health experts estimate that there are 11 to 13 million cases of foodborne illness in Canada every year. Most cases of foodborne illness can be prevented by using safe food handling practices and using a food thermometer to check that your food is cooked to a safe internal temperature!

**It's always important to keep foods out of the danger zone, which is between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F). To do this, just keep hot foods hot, at least 60°C (140°F) and keep cold foods cold at 4°C (40°F) or lower.**

### Preparing and serving holiday buffets

- Prepare foods quickly, cook them thoroughly and serve them promptly. Keep hot foods hot with warming trays, chafing dishes or crock pots. Keep cold foods cold by placing serving dishes on crushed ice.
- Remember the “**2-hour rule**” when entertaining with a large meal or buffet. Don't let perishable foods linger for longer than two hours in the danger zone.
- Keep replacement dishes of food hot in the oven or cold in the refrigerator during the buffet.
- Do not add new food to a serving dish that has been sitting at room temperature for more than two hours.
- Provide serving spoons and tongs for every dish served. Even finger foods, such as cut vegetables, candies and nuts, should have serving implements.

### Traveling with food

- Wrap hot food in foil and heavy towels, or carry in insulated containers to maintain a temperature of at least 60°C (140°F).
- Store cold foods in a cooler with ice/freezer packs so the food remains at 4°C (40°F) or below. Full coolers keep their temperature better than partially full ones.

## **Vegetables, herbs and other foods stored in oil**

(e.g. basil or other herbs in oil; garlic, mushrooms, sundried tomatoes, peppers in oil and also pesto or antipasto)

- Home-prepared products in oil can be made safely by adding dehydrated ingredients only to oil. These products can be kept at room temperature. Dehydrated ingredients include ingredients that are very dry and can be kept at room temperature without spoiling, e.g. dried herbs and spices, dry-packed sundried tomatoes, etc.
- If home-prepared products in oil are made using fresh ingredients, e.g. fresh basil, peppers, mushrooms or garlic, they should be kept refrigerated at all times and must be discarded after one week. These products may be safely frozen for longer storage. Thaw frozen products in the refrigerator. After the products have thawed, they should be kept refrigerated at all times and must be discarded after one week.
- Consumers who purchase products made with fresh ingredients from fairs or farmer's markets or receive them as gifts should check that they were refrigerated after they were prepared, when they were prepared and discard them if more than one week old.
- Commercially-prepared products in oil that contain an acid (such as vinegar) or salt in their list of ingredients are generally considered to be safe. Store them in the refrigerator after opening and between each use. Contact the manufacturer if you have questions about a particular product.

## **Eggnog and other recipes with eggs**

- Be sure to handle and prepare these tasty treats safely. Commercial, ready-made eggnog is prepared using pasteurized eggs and does not require heating. Homemade eggnog may contain harmful bacteria if not prepared properly. Serve homemade eggnog using the directions below or use pasteurized egg products, found in most grocery stores.
- If you choose to make eggnog with whole eggs, heat the egg-milk mixture to at least 71°C (160°F). Refrigerate promptly, once steaming stops, dividing large amounts into shallow containers so that it cools quickly.
- Precautions should also be taken with sauces, mousses, and any other recipes calling for raw or lightly-cooked eggs. Use pasteurized egg products, or bring egg-mixtures to a uniform temperature of 71°C (160°F) - 74°C if using a microwave oven.
- All of these foods must be stored in the refrigerator.

## **Cider**

- Popular holiday beverages, such as unpasteurized apple cider, unpasteurized mulled cider and other drinks made from unpasteurized apple cider may pose a safety risk since they may contain harmful bacteria.
- Use pasteurized ciders or bring unpasteurized cider to a boil before serving. This is especially important when serving cider to children, the elderly, and people with weakened immune systems.

## **Leftovers and storage**

- While it is tempting to leave turkey and other foods at room temperature for snacking after a meal, you should refrigerate leftovers promptly in uncovered, shallow containers so they cool quickly. Cover once food is cooled and steaming stops. Avoid overstocking the refrigerator to allow cool air to circulate freely.
- Store turkey meat separately from stuffing and gravy.
- Reheat solid leftovers to at least 74°C (165°F). Bring gravy to a full, rolling boil and stir during the process.
- Use leftover turkey meat, bones, stuffing, gravy and other cooked dishes within four days.

## **Safeguarding Canada's Food Supply**

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is the Government of Canada's key science-based regulator for animal health, plant protection and, in partnership with Health Canada, food safety. At the CFIA, the safety of Canada's food supply is central to everything we do.

For more information on food safety, visit the CFIA Web site at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca). You can also find food safety information on the Health Canada and Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education Web sites respectively at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) and [www.canfightbac.org](http://www.canfightbac.org).

P0531E-06

November 2006