



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAGINAW COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFERS FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

The holiday season will soon be here and with it will be many activities that involve food. The Saginaw County Department of Public Health (SCDPH) is reminding everyone to take extra care not to let foodborne illness ruin the fun.

- **Wash your hands.** Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water before and after preparing food, after touching raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables, and before eating or drinking.
- **Cook food thoroughly.** (<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html>.) Meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can carry germs that can cause food poisoning. Use a food thermometer to ensure these foods have been cooked to the safe minimum internal temperature. Roasts, chops, steaks and fresh ham should rest for three minutes after removing from the oven or grill.
- **Keep food out of the “danger zone”.** (https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/danger-zone-40-f-140-f/ct_index.) Bacteria can grow rapidly at room temperature. After food is cooked, keep hot food hot and cold food cold. Refrigerate or freeze any perishable food within two hours. The temperature in your refrigerator should be set at or below 40° F and the freezer at or below 0° F.
- **Use pasteurized eggs for dishes containing raw eggs.** *Salmonella* and other harmful germs can live on both the outside and inside of normal-looking eggs. Many holiday favorites contain raw eggs, including eggnog, tiramisu, hollandaise sauce, and Caesar dressing. Always use pasteurized eggs when making these and other foods made with raw eggs.
- **Do not eat dough or batter.**

(<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm508450.htm>.) Dough and batter made with flour or eggs can contain harmful germs, such as *E. coli* and *Salmonella*. Do not taste or eat unpasteurized dough or batter of any kind, including those for cookies, cakes, pies, biscuits, pancakes, tortillas, pizza, or crafts. Do not let children taste raw dough or batter or play with dough at home or in restaurants.

- **Keep foods separated.** (<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/separate/index.html>.) Keep meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separate from all other foods at the grocery and in the refrigerator. Prevent juices from meat, poultry, and seafood from dripping or leaking onto other foods by keeping them in containers or sealed plastic bags. Store eggs in their original carton in the main compartment of the refrigerator.
- **Safely thaw your turkey.** (<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/turkeythawingchart.html>.) Thaw turkey in the refrigerator, in a sink or cold water that is changed every 30 minutes, or in the microwave. (http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/poultry-preparation/turkey-basics-safe-thawing/CT_Index.) Avoid thawing foods on the counter. A turkey must thaw at a safe temperature to prevent harmful germs from growing rapidly.

While everyone wants to keep food safe during the holidays, it is especially important for pregnant women to do so. Pregnant women are 10 times more likely than others to get listeriosis, a rare but deadly foodborne infection caused by the bacteria *Listeria*.

- **Avoid raw or unpasteurized milk and products made with it, such as soft cheeses.** Raw or unpasteurized milk and products made with it can contain harmful germs, including *Listeria*. Avoid drinking raw milk and eating soft cheeses, such as queso fresco, Brie, Camembert, feta, goat cheese, or Roquefort, if they are made from raw or unpasteurized milk. Do not eat or drink other raw or unpasteurized products, such as juice or cider.
- **Be careful with seafood.** (<https://www.foodsafety.gov/risk/pregnant>.) Do not eat refrigerated smoked seafood unless it is in a cooked dish, such as a casserole, or unless it is canned or shelf-stable.
- **Be aware of holiday beverages.** To reduce the possibility of fetal alcohol syndrome, watch out for alcohol-containing holiday punches and eggnogs. Avoid eggnog entirely unless you know it contains no alcohol and is pasteurized or made with pasteurized eggs and milk.

If you believe you or someone you know became ill from eating a certain food, contact your local health department's Environmental Health Division as soon as possible. Most foodborne illnesses occur within one to two days after eating, but can occur anywhere from a few hours to several weeks later, depending on the contaminant involved. When two or more people get the same illness from the same contaminated food or drink, the event is called a foodborne outbreak. Reporting illnesses to the

health department right away helps them identify potential outbreaks of foodborne disease. Public health officials investigate outbreaks to control them, so more people do not get sick. SCDPH's Environmental Health Services can be reached at (989) 758-3686. You can search online for other local health departments in Michigan at <https://malph.org/directory>. Be Wise. Be Well.

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