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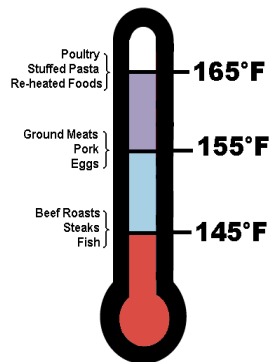
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Food safety tips for preparing holiday meals

WOODSTOCK IL – Planning for holiday meals should include more than a delicious menu and invited guests. McHenry County Department of Health (MCDH) wants you to practice safe food handling as well. Keeping “hot things hot (>135 degrees) and cold things cold” can reduce your risk of a food-borne illness. Other safety tips include --

- Thaw frozen meats in the refrigerator (allow 1 day for each 5 pounds of weight plus an extra day or two).
- Wash hands thoroughly with warm water and soap before and after handling foods.
- Clean all kitchen surfaces before you begin cooking.
- Scrub cutting boards with hot soapy water after preparing food to avoid cross contamination.
- Use a metal stemmed food thermometer to ensure food is cooked to the proper temperature. Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill harmful bacteria (see below).
- It is recommended that leftovers be refrigerated within 2 hours of serving time.



Insert the thermometer into the center of the thickest part (away from the bone) of the meat. When cooking casseroles and egg dishes, place the thermometer into the thickest portion, making sure the thermometer does not touch the bottom of the pan. Metal stemmed thermometers can be purchased at grocery, hardware and department stores.

Food-borne illness is preventable. If you suspect a food-borne illness, contact MCDH for investigation. Staff can be reached at 815-334-4585, Monday - Friday from 8am to 4:30pm. For after hour emergencies, call 815-344-7421. Visit www.foodsafety.gov for other tips.

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“Working to prevent disease and promote health and safety for all people of McHenry County since 1966.”