

Avoiding Food Illness

Food illnesses can easily be prevented by making sure the turkey is prepared properly and work spaces are clean.

- Thaw the turkey completely before you begin to cook it.
- The internal temperature of the bird must reach 165 degrees to make sure all the bacteria is killed.
- Always check the internal temperature with a calibrated thermometer and do not rely on the "pop-up" thermometer.
- Wash all work spaces, utensils and hands before starting and once they come in contact with raw meat to prevent cross contamination.
- Cold foods must be kept at a temperature of 41 degrees or lower to prevent bacterial growth.
- Hot foods must be at a temperature of 135 degrees or higher to keep bacteria from growing.

Always be aware of any food safety problems when you are preparing your Thanksgiving turkey.



For any additional questions call Janet Johnson, food safety and quality extension specialist.

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How to Properly Thaw Your Thanksgiving Turkey



Don't let your Thanksgiving be ruined by an improperly thawed turkey.

Best Way to Thaw the Bird

Thawing is different for fresh and frozen turkeys.

- Buy fresh turkeys no earlier than one or two days before Thanksgiving.
- Keep it on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator on a tray to catch any meat juices.
- For a frozen bird, allow 24 hours for every 5 pounds to thaw.
- Do not start thawing it more than one or two days before cooking.
- Do not let it sit on the counter at room temperature for hours in cool or warm water.
- Thawing in a full refrigerator can take longer.



When to Start

There are several ways to properly thaw the turkey.

- Purchase the turkey early enough to allow for proper thawing in the refrigerator
- Leave the bird in the package and place in a shallow pan and run cold water over the turkey.
- Another option is to place the packaged turkey in a container of cold water, but you must remember to change the water out every 30 minutes.
- Always use cold water because this prevents dangerous bacteria from growing.



Food Safety Problems

An improperly thawed bird can create food safety issues.

Beware of the temperature danger zone, which is between 41 and 135 degrees F

- Dangerous bacteria grows if the turkey is not thawed properly.
- Cooking the frozen turkey in a slow oven, at a temperature of 325 degrees or lower, will cause bacteria to grow.
- Setting the oven at a lower temperature and letting a frozen or partially thawed bird cook longer will put it in the temperature danger zone.
- Some bacteria grows rapidly and produces heat resistant toxins during the temperature danger zone.
- Cross contamination between raw and cooked foods can cause food illnesses.

