Clinton County Health Department

133 Margaret Street, Plattsburgh, New York 12901-2926

"Working Together for a Healthier Community"

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Administration Division **Phone: (518) 565-4840** **Fax: (518) 565-4717**

Media Release

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Contact: 518-565-4840

Holiday Food Safety

Plattsburgh, November 2, 2026. No matter which holidays your friends and family celebrate, the Clinton County Health Department (CCHD) is reminding residents to take steps to properly wash, separate, cook and chill your food to reduce your risk of foodborne illness.

"Foodborne illness (sometimes called food poisoning, foodborne disease, or foodborne infection) is common, costly—and preventable," explained Karen Noonan, Supervising Public Health Sanitarian in the Environmental Health and Safety Division at CCHD.

Symptoms of food poisoning often include diarrhea, vomiting, upset stomach, or nausea. Some foods are more likely than others to contain germs that can make you sick. These foods include:

- Raw and undercooked foods from animals, including beef, pork, chicken and other poultry, eggs, seafood, and raw milk and products made from it.
- Raw vegetables, grains, and fruits or products made from them, including leafy greens, sprouts, melons, and flour.

The main steps in reducing the chance of foodborne illness include the proper cleaning, separation, cooking, and chilling of foods.

1. **Clean.**
    - Wash your hands often to prevent your germs from touching the food you are cooking. It is important to wash your hands (each time) after you handle meat, chicken or other poultry, seafood, flour, or eggs as well as any time you cough, sneeze, blow your nose, go to the bathroom, touch your pets, etc.
    - Wash the counter, utensils, and anything else the foods touch in hot, soapy water to prevent cross contamination – or spreading germs from one food to another.
    - Rinse all fruits and vegetables under plain running water before eating, cutting or cooking, even if you plan to peel them. Washing produce with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended.
2. **Separate.**
    - It is important to get perishable foods into the refrigerator within 2 hours. Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw meat and poultry, cooked meat and poultry, and ready-to-eat items like vegetables or bread.
    - Always use a fresh, clean plate and tongs for serving cooked food. Never reuse items that have touched raw meat or poultry to serve the food once it's cooked.
3. **Cook.**

- Use a food thermometer to see if your food is the right temperature. Food is safely cooked when the internal temperature gets high enough to kill germs that can make you sick.
- All parts of potentially hazardous food requiring cooking are to be heated to at least 140ºF, except:
    - 130ºF for rare beef steaks or roast beef.
    - 145ºF for fish, shelled eggs or foods containing shelled eggs.
    - 150ºF for pork and food containing pork.
    - 158ºF for every part of ground meat or food containing ground meat.
    - 165ºF for poultry, poultry stuffing, stuffed meats, stuffing containing meat, and leftovers.

4. Chill.

- Chill raw and prepared foods as soon as possible if you're not eating them right away.
- Foods that need to be kept cold include raw meat, poultry, and seafood; luncheon and deli meats or sandwiches; summer salads (tuna, chicken, egg, pasta, or seafood); cut up fruit and vegetables; and perishable dairy products.
- Don't leave food at room temperature for longer than 2 hours (or 1 hour if it's above 90°F).
- Thaw frozen food safely in the refrigerator, under cold running water, or in the microwave. Never thaw foods on the counter, because bacteria multiply quickly in the parts of the food that reach room temperature

"Food safety isn't about being perfect—it's about building good habits," explained Ms. Noonan. "The more you practice these steps, the more natural they'll feel. At the end of the day, food safety is really about taking care of the people you love."

Visit the North Country Health Effect at https://www.clintoncountyny.gov/sites/default/files/health/public-promotion/pdf/north-county-health-effect/food-safety.pdf to learn more about food safety.

About the Clinton County Health Department:

The Health Department is an accredited full service department serving the residents of Clinton County. The Health Department's Mission is to improve and protect the health, well-being and environment of the people of Clinton County. Visit our website at health.clintoncountyny.gov or connect with us on Facebook (@clintonhealth), X (Twitter [@ClintonCountyHD]), and Instagram (clintoncountyhealth).

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