

Taste and See Sessions' 10 safety tips to prevent foodborne illness during the holiday season:

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), foodborne illnesses spike during the holiday season, with an estimated 48 million Americans experiencing food poisoning annually. During the holidays, the risk increases due to large family gatherings, complex meal preparations, and improper food handling. As of July 2024, the CDC reports that approximately 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths occur each year from foodborne diseases. Particularly during Thanksgiving and Christmas, there's a notable rise in outbreaks linked to improper turkey preparation, with *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* being the most common pathogens. Undercooked meats, cross-contamination, and inadequate refrigeration contribute significantly to these health risks. The holiday season sees a 20% increase in foodborne illness cases compared to other times of the year, making food safety practices crucial for protecting family and guests from potential serious health complications.

1. Wash Hands Thoroughly: Clean hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food, especially when touching raw meats.
2. Use Separate Cutting Boards: Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood separate from fruits, vegetables, and cooked foods to prevent cross-contamination.
3. Cook Meats to Safe Temperatures: Use a meat thermometer to ensure proper internal temperatures - turkey (165°F), ham (145°F), and beef roast (145°F with 3-minute rest).
4. Refrigerate Promptly: Refrigerate perishable foods within 2 hours of cooking (1 hour if room temperature is above 90°F). Keep cold foods at or below 40°F and hot foods at or above 140°F.
5. Thaw Safely: Thaw frozen meats in the refrigerator, not on the counter. Allow approximately 24 hours of refrigeration for every 4-5 pounds of turkey.
6. Avoid Raw Egg Risks: Use pasteurized eggs for dishes like eggnog or recipes with raw eggs. Cook egg dishes until firm.

7. Clean Kitchen Surfaces: Regularly sanitize countertops, cutting boards, and utensils with hot, soapy water or disinfectant solutions.

8. Be Careful with Leftovers: Store leftovers in shallow containers, use within 3-4 days, and reheat to at least 165°F throughout.

9. Watch Buffet Times: Limit buffet food sitting at room temperature to 2 hours. Replace dishes frequently and keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

10. Practice Personal Hygiene: Anyone feeling sick should not prepare food. If someone has had stomach flu or vomiting, keep them away from food preparation areas.