



ISLAND COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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HEALTH INFORMATION BULLETIN (HIB)

HIB #301

HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY MEASURES

Topics covered in this HIB:

- Cleaning
- Cooking
- Storage

Each year, many Washington residents and visitors unnecessarily suffer from foodborne illness due to improperly handled food. "Simply taking a couple minutes to wash your hands before making that favorite family dish can make a world of difference," says food safety specialist Janet Anderberg.

Already this year, foods commonly served during the holidays have been linked to various outbreaks caused by *E. coli* and noroviruses. The contaminated foods included eggs, poultry, beef, cider, fruits and vegetables. During the holiday season when large quantities of foods are being prepared for family and friends, extra food safety precautions are important. To keep yourself and your loved ones healthy this holiday season, the Washington State Department of Health offers some simple food handling reminders:

- Always wash your hands before preparing food and after handling raw meats. Use warm water, soap and paper towels. Inadequate hand washing is a leading cause of foodborne disease.
- Clean and sanitize cutting boards, knives and countertops that come in contact with raw meat. Use an antibacterial cleaner or make your own sanitizer by mixing one teaspoon of bleach per one gallon of water.
- Scrub vegetables, especially if they are being served raw for a vegetable tray. All produce should be washed by rinsing under cold running water. Do not soak in standing water.
- Tough-skinned produce, such as cantaloupe, should be scrubbed with a brush or cloth during washing.
- Cook food to safe temperatures. Use a food thermometer to make sure meat is thoroughly cooked. Food should reach the following temperatures:
 - o Poultry products (including stuffing) – 180 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - o Pork – 160 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - o Ground meat dishes – 160 degrees Fahrenheit.
 - o All other meat products – 145 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Do not allow perishable food to sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track – after two hours, refrigerate, reheat or throw it away.

More information on holiday food safety is available on the "Featured Topics" section of the Department of Health [Web](http://www.doh.wa.gov) site (www.doh.wa.gov). Information is also available at the [Food and Drug Administration's](http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/ANSWERS/2003/ANS01263.html) Web site: (http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/ANSWERS/2003/ANS01263.html), or the [Partnership for Food Safety Education's Web site](http://www.fightbac.org/holidayfact.cfm) (http://www.fightbac.org/holidayfact.cfm).

Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <http://www.doh.wa.gov> for a **healthy dose of information**.

This Fact Sheet was adapted from a news release of the Washington State Department of Health, 21 November 2006

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