

# Food Safety for Families

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## Holiday Food Safety

Dear Parents,

The holidays are fun and joyous occasions when family and friends get together for parties and food galore! The last thing you want to invite to your party is food-borne illness. Use the following tips to keep your family and friends from becoming sick. Don't let bacteria (germs) **crash** your holiday parties.

### BUFFETS

Buffets are a popular way to celebrate holidays with family and friends. This type of food service, where foods are left out for long periods, leaves the door open for uninvited guests -- bacteria that cause food borne illness. Festive times for giving and sharing should not include sharing foodborne illness.



### Preparing Food for Your Party

- Always wash your hands with warm water and soap before and after handling food.
- Keep your kitchen, dishes and utensils clean.
- Always serve food on clean plates -- never use plates used for holding raw meat and poultry for cooked food.

### Party Crasher - *Clostridium perfringens*

"*Perfringens*" is called the "cafeteria germ" because *perfringens* may be found in foods served in large quantities. The bacteria (germs) grow when the food is left for more than 2 hours at room temperature.

To prevent problems with this bacteria growing in your food:

- Keep cooked foods hot (140°F or higher).
- Use chafing dishes, slow cookers and warming trays to keep foods hot on your buffet table.
- Keep cold foods at 40°F or colder.
- Keep foods cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice **OR** use small serving trays and replace them often.
- Cool foods quickly in your refrigerator.
- Divide large portions of cooked foods into smaller portions to cool quickly in your refrigerator.

Bacteria can also multiply quickly in moist desserts that contain dairy products. Keep eggnog, cheesecakes, cream pies and cakes with whipped-cream or cream-cheese frostings refrigerated until serving time.

**Helpful Hint** - Prepare extra serving platters and dishes ahead of time; store them in the refrigerator or keep them hot in the oven (set at approximately 200 to 250°F) before serving. Then **REPLACE** empty platters rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already had food in it.

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## FightBac!®

Bacteria (germs), viruses and parasites are everywhere in the environment! They are organisms that you cannot see, smell, or taste. In fact, they can contaminate food and cause life-threatening illness. Foodborne illness (food poisoning) can strike anyone, especially young children, pregnant women (it endangers their unborn babies too), older adults, and persons with weakened immune systems.

## LEFTOVERS

Leftover turkey and other dishes means you can have more tasty meals the day after your feast. But there are limits on how long you can safely keep leftovers. When heating and storing leftovers keep the following in mind:

- Refrigerate cooked leftovers promptly - within 2 hours.
- Use an appliance thermometer in your refrigerator to keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below.
- Divide leftovers into smaller portions and store in shallow containers in the refrigerator.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 15 seconds before and after handling food.
- Reheat cooked leftovers to 165°F; use a food thermometer to measure the temperature.
- Sauces, soups and gravies should be reheated by bringing them to a boil.
- When microwaving leftovers, make sure there are no cold spots in food (where bacteria can survive). Cover food, stir and rotate for even cooking.

## Cold Storage Guidelines for Some Holiday Foods

Product	Refrigerator (40 °F)	Freezer (0 °F)
Fresh Eggs, in shell	3 to 5 week	Do not freeze
Soups & Stews-vegetable or meat added	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Fresh turkey, whole	1 to 2 days	1 year
Fresh turkey, pieces	1 to 2 days	9 months
Giblets	1 to 2 days	3 to 4 months
Cooked meat & meat casseroles	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Vegetable Casseroles	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Gravy & meat broth	3 to 4 days	2 to 3 months
Cooked poultry casseroles	3 to 4 days	4 to 6 months
Stuffing, cooked	3 to 4 days	1 month

