



Spread cheer, not illness, for holidays

Last year, we had a party during the holidays and several guests became ill afterward. We're not sure if it was food poisoning or not, but this year we want to be extra cautious about food safety. What are the most important things to keep in mind?

No matter what time of year, it's important to keep food safety at top of mind. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 1 in 6 Americans gets sick each year because of foodborne diseases; an estimated 128,000 are hospitalized and 3,000 die.

Food safety researchers say the most important precaution you can take is to wash your hands thoroughly, properly and often, especially when preparing and serving food. To do so, first wet your hands. Then apply soap, and rub both sides of your hands for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse thoroughly and dry with a clean towel or a paper towel. It's essential to wash your hands before handling food and after touching animals, touching your nose or face, going to the bathroom, or changing a diaper. And if you're sick, don't handle food that others will eat.

Washing your hands often offers a double bonus. Not only will it help prevent food-borne illness, it will also help prevent the spread of germs

and viruses that cause flu and other diseases.

Some other things to keep in mind:

- Take special care when handling raw meat. For example, experts say don't bother rinsing off the raw Thanksgiving turkey before cooking it. Thorough cooking kills any problematic bacteria or other pathogens; rinsing the large bird is likely to splash and spread bacteria around the sink and nearby countertops. Whenever you handle raw meat, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly afterward, and clean and sanitize all surfaces the raw meat touched.

- Temperature is important. Most foodborne bacteria grow rapidly between 40 and 140 degrees F -- that's called the Danger Zone. If you're serving hot food on a buffet, for example, be sure it's kept above 140 degrees (use a food thermometer). Never leave food at room temperature — or anywhere in the Danger Zone — for more than two hours. When using slow cookers to serve hot food, be sure the food is hot when placed in the cooker; don't use the cooker to try to reheat cold food. Cold food, such as shrimp cocktail, should be kept on ice when being served.

For more safety tips, see Ohio State University's Food Safety website at <http://foodsafety.osu.edu>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

**For the week of
Nov. 20, 2011**

By Martha Filipic

614-292-9833

filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Lydia Medeiros, food safety specialist with Ohio State University Extension, scientist with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, and professor of human nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

**Communications and
Technology**

News and Marketing

2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA. Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868