



## 10 Holiday Food Safety Tips

**When prepping a scrumptious holiday feast, don't forget the rules of food safety.**

While you are making your holiday grocery list - and checking it twice - don't forget about one of the most important ingredients: food safety. Just like any other key item, your festive feast could be ruined without it.

Harmful bacteria grow and thrive on foods that are not safely prepared, cooked, or chilled. If you eat food contaminated with these germs, you could get food poisoning. And, feeling sick is no way to spend the holidays. Common germs that cause foodborne illness include *E. coli*, *Campylobacter*, *Salmonella*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Spending time planning ahead and paying close attention to detail, you can be food safe this holiday season. Follow these tips:

- 1. Buy your turkey or ham at the right time.** Do not buy fresh turkey or ham too far in advance. If you buy frozen turkey, set aside enough time for it to thoroughly thaw in the refrigerator. Follow these guidelines:
  1. *Fresh turkey* should be purchased one to two days before you cook it. Keep it refrigerated.
  2. *Frozen turkey* takes 24 hours per four to five pounds to thaw in the refrigerator. A 10-pound frozen turkey will take two to three days to thaw in the refrigerator before it can be cooked.
  3. *Fully cooked ham* should be eaten by the "use-by" date on the package. If there is no date, eat it within three to five days of purchase.
  4. *Cook-before-eating hams* should be cooked and eaten within seven days of purchase.
- 2. Thaw properly.** Food should never be thawed on the kitchen counter. Thaw in the refrigerator or in cold water. To thaw in water, keep the meat in its original packaging or place it in a leak-proof bag. Fully submerge the food in a clean pot or pan containing cold water. Change the water every 30 minutes. Cook the food right away after it's thawed.
- 3. Clean your hands and surfaces.** Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before you prepare any food. Wash your hands again after handling uncooked foods. Make sure all utensils, dishes, and surfaces are clean, too.
- 4. Separate.** To avoid cross-contamination, keep uncooked foods separate from ready-to-eat foods. Use one cutting board for raw meats and a different one for produce. Always use a clean plate for cooked foods, not one that previously held uncooked meat.
- 5. Use a food thermometer.** Cooking foods to a safe internal temperature kills harmful bacteria. You cannot tell if a food is done cooking just by looking at its color. A food thermometer is a necessity. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) says holiday foods are safe to eat at these temperatures:

<b>Turkey and other poultry</b>	165 degrees F
<b>Fully cooked hams</b>	May be eaten cold or reheated to 140 degrees F
<b>Cook-before-eating hams</b>	160 degrees F
<b>Beef</b>	145 degrees F (Ground beef to 160 degrees F)



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<b>Lamb</b>	145 degrees F (Ground lamb to 160 degrees F)
<b>Pork</b>	145 degrees F
<b>Stuffing</b> (Cook in a casserole dish, not inside the turkey, for optimal safety.)	165 degrees F
<b>Egg dishes, including eggnog</b> (Eggnog should be cooked first, and then cooled in the refrigerator. Never eat uncooked eggs.)	160 degrees F
<b>Cream or custard pies</b>	160 degrees F
<b>Leftovers</b>	Reheated to 165 degrees F

1. **Never partially cook foods.** Partial cooking puts foods in the "danger zone." The danger zone is the temperature range where bacteria thrive, between 40 degrees F and 140 degrees F.
2. **Serve food safely:**
  1. *Use several small trays* to serve your guests, instead of using a large one. Keep extra food hot in the oven or cold in the refrigerator until ready to serve. Use a new tray when serving more food instead of replenishing existing platters.
  2. *Keep hot foods hot.* Hot items should be kept at 140 degrees F or hotter. Keep these foods hot by serving them in chafing dishes, warming trays, and slow cookers.
  3. *Keep cold foods cold.* Place cold foods in dishes that are surrounded by ice.
3. **Chill promptly.** Food should not sit out at room temperature for more than two hours (or one hour if the temperature is over 90 degrees F where it is being served). Refrigerate leftovers right after serving.
4. **Store food in shallow containers.** Divide leftovers into shallow containers before you put them in the fridge or freezer. This will allow the food to cool quickly and evenly.
5. **Safely enjoy leftovers.** Leftovers are only safe to eat for a few days after being cooked. Eat or freeze leftovers within three to four days. When reheating food in the microwave, make sure the entire portion is hot. And, only reheat the amount of food you will eat. Repeated heating and cooling encourages bacteria to grow.

## Coping With Holiday Stress

The holiday season can be a time of joy, but it can also be hectic and stressful. Use these nine tips to calm the pressure.



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Most children wait eagerly for the holidays to arrive. Adults often have more mixed feelings. For them, the holidays mean increased stress: dashing to decorate the house, elbowing through crowds at the mall, and fretting about the right gift or how to pay for it.

Relax. Don't let stress suck the joy out of your holiday season. These tips can help you keep stress under control so your holidays can be merry and bright.

1. **Create a game plan.** Spend a little time up front getting organized. Make a list of what you need to buy. Try to shop ahead of time, before things are picked over and you're under pressure. If you'll be cooking, plan your menu. Think whether some items could be prepared ahead and frozen or refrigerated.
2. **Make a budget and stick to it.** Money is one of the major stressors during the holidays. Don't dig yourself into a hole by overspending. A thoughtful gift doesn't have to be expensive. If money is tight, suggest a family gift exchange with a spending limit.
3. **Accept reality.** Guests may arrive late. Your mother may get on your nerves. The turkey may be dry. Real life isn't a holiday special. Don't expect perfect decorations, a perfect meal, or perfect people. Try to go with the flow and enjoy what you have.
4. **Beware of unhealthy stress relievers.** Holiday stress causes some people to fall into bad habits such as smoking, drinking, or eating too much. Think about any unhealthy habits you're prone to and better ways to handle stress.
5. **Create new traditions.** Stressed out by the usual festivities? Try something different. Instead of cooking a huge meal on your own, make it a potluck. Ask adults to bring gag gifts or have a "white elephant" or used book gift exchange. Attend a local holiday concert, walk the neighborhood to look at holiday lights, or go sledding.
6. **Make time for your health.** In the holiday rush, don't let your well-being fall by the wayside. Try to stay on your normal sleep schedule and get regular exercise. If you can't find a 30-minute chunk of time for exercise, break it up into three 10-minute sessions spread through the day.
7. **Watch out for caffeine and alcohol.** Caffeine can raise your stress and interfere with sleep. Alcoholic drinks contain lots of calories, and drinking too much may make you feel depressed. Instead, drink plenty of water or try herb tea or seltzer.
8. **Give yourself a break.** In the midst of doing things for others, it's easy to forget to take care of ourselves. If you feel stress building up, get away for a few minutes. Find a quiet corner and do some deep breathing, listen to calming music, or just sit. Or throw on a coat and slip outside for a walk.
1. **Enjoy!** The holidays are supposed to be a time of joy and togetherness. In the flurry of the holidays, we sometimes forget what we're celebrating. Remember to savor the time with people you love.

## Holidays Without Headaches

**Does last-minute shopping in a hot, crowded mall make your head hurt? Read how to prevent holiday headaches.**

As enjoyable as holiday planning may be, does it ever give you a headache? Between the shopping, the wrapping, the cooking, and the decorating, does holiday stress make your head throb?

According to a survey by the National Headache Foundation, over half of those polled admitted that they have an increase or worsening of their headache symptoms during the holiday season. Three very common triggers of headaches are stress, changes in sleep patterns, and exposure to smoke and perfume. These triggers are widespread during the holidays.

These tips may help you avoid holiday stress and a bad headache:



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- **Plan ahead.** If you are making travel arrangements, give yourself extra time to check your baggage, get through security, and find your gate. If you're driving, allow extra time for traffic.
- **Avoid marathon mall shopping.** If going in and out of one crowded store after another gives you headaches, don't do it. Shop online or plan several short shopping trips instead of squeezing everything into one long day at the mall. Make a list of gifts you need to buy, and don't wait until the last minute to buy them.
- **Remember to eat.** You may get so caught up in your holiday shopping that you start skipping meals. Keep a healthy snack in your glove compartment or handbag.
- **Get some fresh air.** Many holiday celebrations are held indoors in close quarters. Request that people not smoke in your home. Secondhand smoke is not good for anyone and is also a common headache trigger for many. The smell of perfume and cologne may also trigger headaches.
- **Drink only in moderation.** If you choose to drink, try blending alcohol with fruit juice instead of drinking it straight. Alternate alcoholic beverages with water or soda. Don't drink red wine, which is a trigger for many. Try not to drink alcohol in the hours right before you go to bed. Limit yourself to one alcoholic beverage if you are a female and two if you are a male. And *never* drink and drive.
- **Don't stray from your normal sleep schedule.** Staying up later than usual and sleeping in the next day may cause headaches. Try your best to stick to your normal routine.
- **Pamper yourself.** Give yourself some time alone to relax. Don't feel like you have to make an appearance at every holiday party you're invited to. Do as much socializing as you're comfortable with, and spend the rest of your time with your loved ones or alone reading a good book.
- **Remember the true meaning of the holidays.** Don't put pressure on yourself to be the perfect decorator, party host, or gift giver. Let yourself enjoy preparing for the season instead of stressing over it. Stay within your budget and remember that your holiday is about spending time with your loved ones - not about putting yourself in debt.
- **Talk to your doctor.** If you're getting more headaches than you did before - or if they're more intense - make an appointment to see your doctor.

Remember that it's the holiday season, a time to relax and unwind with family and friends. So take care of yourself, avoid stress, and take the time to make new holiday memories with your loved ones.

## Go Green This Holiday Season

**Don't let holiday stress crowd out your good intentions. Here are some ways to stay "green" through the season of giving.**

You have good intentions. You use compact fluorescent light bulbs. You try to "reduce, reuse, recycle." But when the holidays come, it's easy to fall back into old habits and forget about your impact on the environment.

It's even more important to make green choices during the holiday season. An estimated 6 million tons of extra garbage is produced in the U.S. between Thanksgiving and New Year's. You can do your part to cut the waste, and you may even save money. Now that's something to celebrate.

### 8 Tips for greener holidays

1. **Take your own bags.** Get some sturdy canvas, mesh, or nylon shopping bags and take them with you when you do your holiday shopping. For large items, skip bagging if you can.



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2. **Look for the Energy Star.** Products with the Energy Star rating have met strict energy-efficiency standards, so they use less energy and save money. Energy Star rates an array of products, from light bulbs to TVs to large appliances.
3. **Buy recycled.** Items with recycled content help cut down on consumer waste. A wide variety of glassware, jewelry, paper products, and even clothing is made with recycled materials.
4. **Think outside the box.** Instead of a gift that can break or wear out, give tickets to a concert, play, sports event, or membership to a local museum or botanical garden. Present a coupon good for an evening of babysitting or knitting lessons.
5. **Be a green wrapper.** Most wrapping paper can't be recycled, so it ends up in the trash. Make your own wrapping paper from the Sunday comic pages, maps, catalog pages, or brown paper bags. Wrap gifts in useful items such as bandanas or kitchen towels and tie with ribbon or lace. Or buy gift bags, tins, or baskets and reuse them each year. According to the Sierra Club, if every family did this with just *three* presents, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.
6. **Decorate with LED lights.** LED lights use 90 percent less energy than standard holiday lights, and they last longer, too. They may cost a little more up front, but they pay for themselves in the long run.
7. **Recycle your tree.** Many cities have tree recycling during the holidays. Check with your local recycling program to find out about pickup or drop-off options.
8. **Recycle old electronics.** You got the new cell phone you wished for. But now, what do you do with your old cell phone? Or the MP3 player that went through the wash, or the rechargeable battery that no longer holds a charge? Recycle them. Recyclers recover millions of pounds of copper and precious metals from electronics every year. Recycling cuts pollution created by making new products, conserves resources, and keeps hazardous materials out of landfills.
9. To recycle consumer electronics:
  1. **Drop them off at local stores.** Best Buy, Office Depot, and Staples provide drop boxes for old cell phones, PDA's, rechargeable batteries, and other items.
  2. **Return them to manufacturers.** HP, Dell, Sony, AT&T, and others provide mail-in or drop-off recycling for used electronics. Some will take larger items such as TVs and computers, even ones made by other manufacturers.
  3. **Donate them.** Some schools have electronics recycling programs that raise money for activities. Check with your local school district to find out if a school in your area has a program.

To learn more about electronics recycling (eCycling), go to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web site at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov) and type *ecycling* in the search box.

