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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Food Safety During the Holidays
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The holiday season is upon us and for many that means visits from relatives, gift giving, and eating. A lot of eating. To make sure your holiday festivities stay festive, and everyone stays healthy, the food safety experts at the Taney County Health Department would like to share the four core guidelines for food safety.

Clean. Bacteria spreads from kitchen items being dirty, so it's important to keep everything clean. This includes cutting boards, knives, utensils, counter tops, and food. Thoroughly wash your hands for 20 seconds before and during food preparation. Make sure to wash cutting boards, and utensils with hot soapy water after prepping each food and before moving on to the next food item. Bacteria can grow on fresh fruits and vegetables, be sure to rinse them under running tap water.

Separate. Improper handling of raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can create an environment for cross-contamination. This could result in harmful bacteria spreading throughout the kitchen. To decrease the risk of cross-contamination, be sure to separate meat, poultry, fish and eggs in your shopping cart, grocery bags, and refrigerator. Use different cutting board for fruits and vegetables, raw meat, poultry, and seafood. Replace any plates that have had raw meat, poultry, seafood, or eggs on it with a clean one.

Cook. Use a calibrated food thermometer to measure the internal temperature of cooked meat, poultry, and egg dishes. (click here for a video on calibrating a thermometer <https://youtu.be/B8Ua3TCbQbE>) Internal temperature guidelines when cooking meats are:

- Roasts and steaks cooked to 145 ° F
- Chicken and turkey cooked to 165° F
- Ground meat (hamburgers) cooked to 155° F
- Seafood cooked to 145° F

Cook eggs until they are white and firm, not runny. Don't use recipes requiring eggs to be left raw or partially cooked. Heat leftovers to 165° F and make sure leftover sauces, soups, and gravies are brought to a boil when reheating.

Chill. Refrigerate foods quickly to prevent bacteria growth. Don't over stuff the refrigerator, cold air needs to circulate to keep food safe. Keep the refrigerator at 40° F or less to effectively reduce foodborne illness. Do not defrost food at room temperature and divide large amounts of food into shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.

For more information contact the Taney County Health Department at 417-334-4544, visit our website at www.taneycohealth.org, or like our Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest pages.

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The Taney County Health Department envisions a community of healthy people. Every day, we work to achieve this vision through leadership, collaboration, education and service. We value integrity, learning, teamwork, positive communication, quality improvement and dedicated service. Please visit our website <http://www.taneycohealth.org> to learn more about our services.