



# Genesee County Health Department

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE:** December 19, 2012

**END DATE:** January 1, 2013

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**RE:** Holiday Food Safety

The Genesee County Health Department wishes you a healthy holiday season. With that in mind, we would like to remind everyone to handle food safely. We recommend that you *Check Your Steps: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill* appropriately.

*Clean:* Wash hands and surfaces often. Illness-causing bacteria live and survive on many surfaces in your kitchen; including your hands, utensils, cutting boards, countertops, etc.

*Separate:* Don't cross-contaminate. Even after you have properly cleaned your hands and all surfaces, illness-causing bacteria can still spread to ready-to-eat foods, unless you keep them separated. Use separate cutting boards and other preparatory tools for produce and for meat, poultry, seafood and eggs. Designate one cutting board for fresh produce and another cutting board for raw meat, poultry and seafood. Once a cutting board develops hard-to-clean grooves, it's time to replace it. Separation of fresh produce and meat, poultry, seafood and eggs should also be applied while grocery shopping, bagging groceries and for storage in the refrigerator.

*Cook:* Cook to the right temperature. Illness-causing bacteria multiplies quickest in the “Danger Zone” between 41°F and 135°F. Steps to keep your foods out of the danger zone are: use a food thermometer, keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold, cool warm foods quickly when putting them in the refrigerator or freezer, and microwave food thoroughly. *For more information regarding proper cooking temperatures and rest times visit <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html>.*

*Chill:* Refrigerate promptly. Cold temperatures inhibit the growth of illness-causing bacteria, so it's important to chill food quickly. Here are some suggestions on how to do so:

- Make sure your fridge and freezer are at the correct temperature. The fridge should be between 40°F and 32°F. The freezer should be 0°F or below.
- Do not over-stuff your fridge; to properly chill food cold air must be able to circulate.
- Remember to store leftovers in a timely fashion. If you divide leftovers into several smaller containers, the food will chill more quickly and effectively.

Never thaw or marinate foods on the counter. To thaw foods safely use one of these methods:

- Thaw in the refrigerator; this is the safest method.
- Thaw in cold water.
- Thaw in the microwave.
- Cook without thawing. This method is safe, but it will take at least 50% longer to fully cook.

Lastly, know when it's time to throw food out. For more information on *storage times for both the refrigerator and the freezer visit <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/storagetimes.html>*. Check your steps and avoid food borne illness this holiday season. The Genesee County Health Department wishes you healthy holidays!