

**NEWS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Media Contact:**

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**November 24, 2025*****Tips for Practicing Safe Food Handling During Thanksgiving***

Ventura County, CA — This Thanksgiving, add fresh flavors to your holiday meal while preventing foodborne illness with practical tips from Ventura County Public Health (VCPH) and Ventura County Resource Management Agency Environmental Health Division (EH).

Each year, VCPH and EH investigate cases of foodborne illness caused by undercooked food or improper food handling. Recently, there has been an uptick in Salmonella cases in Ventura County.

Salmonella bacteria cause an infection known as salmonellosis, with symptoms such as stomach pain, vomiting, fever, and diarrhea that can begin hours or days after consuming contaminated food. Most healthy individuals recover within a few days without treatment, but older adults, infants, young children, pregnant individuals, and those with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for severe illness. If you are feeling ill and experiencing symptoms, contact your health care provider. If you work with food or care for vulnerable individuals, it is important to stay home until you are well or have been tested to prevent further spread.

**There are things you can do to help prevent salmonellosis this Thanksgiving to keep you and your loved ones safe:**

**Thawing a Turkey**

- Refrigerator: Keep the turkey in its original wrapper at 40°F or below. Allow approximately 24 hours per 5 pounds of turkey. Once thawed, refrigerate for no more than 1–2 days before cooking.
- Cold Water: Place the turkey in a leakproof bag, submerge it in cold water, and change the water every 30 minutes. Allow 30 minutes per pound. Cook immediately after thawing.
- Microwave: Only use if the turkey fits comfortably. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for thawing time and power level. Cook immediately after thawing.

**Cooking a Turkey**

- Roast to an internal temperature of 165°F. Check by inserting a food thermometer into three places, avoiding bone: the thickest part of the breast, the innermost part of the thigh, and the innermost part of the wing.
- Cook the stuffing separately in a casserole dish for even cooking and safety.

### **Other Safe Food Handling Practices**

- Wash your hands with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Clean utensils, plates, countertops, and cutting boards with soap and warm water after each use.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water before eating, even if they will be peeled.
- Keep raw turkey (and any raw meat) separated from fresh foods, especially fruits and vegetables.
- Use different cutting boards and utensils for meat and fresh food.
- Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours of cooking. Leftovers can be stored in the refrigerator for 3-4 days or frozen for 2-6 months.
- Divide leftovers into smaller portions to help them cool quickly and evenly in the fridge. Reheat these leftovers to 165°F before serving.

By following these recommendations, you can enjoy a festive, flavorful Thanksgiving while protecting the health of your family and community.

To report a foodborne illness associated with food purchased at permitted or unpermitted facilities located in Ventura County, file a complaint with EH at: <https://eco.vcrma.org/>. For more information on food safety, visit the EH website at: <https://rma.venturacounty.gov/divisions/environmental-health/food-safety-information/>.

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