



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

HOCKING COUNTY HEALTH **DEPARTMENT**

350 State Route 664 North ~ Logan, Ohio 43138
Phone 740-385-3030 Fax 740-385-2252

Countdown to the Thanksgiving Holiday

Part 1-Plan Ahead

As Thanksgiving approaches, cooking the traditional turkey dinner gives rise to anxieties and questions. What kind of turkey should I buy? Should I buy a frozen turkey or a fresh one? How do I cook and serve my turkey?

A few simple steps will not only ease your holiday fears, but will ensure a delicious and a safe meal for you, your family, and your friends. The following information from United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Hocking County Health Department may help you prepare your special Thanksgiving meal and help you countdown to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Plan Ahead

Plan your menu several weeks before the holiday. Shopping early will ease the countdown tension for your Thanksgiving meal. Ask these questions to help plan your meal. Do you want a fresh or frozen turkey? Do you have enough space to store a frozen bird if purchased in advance; if not, when should you purchase a turkey? What size bird do you need to buy?

- **Fresh or Frozen?** If you choose to buy a frozen bird you may do so at any time, but make sure you have adequate storage space in your freezer. If you buy a fresh turkey, be sure you purchase it only 1-2 days before cooking. Do not buy a pre-stuffed fresh turkey.

Shopping

Make the grocery store or grocery department your last stop of your shopping trip.

- **Separate** raw meat, poultry, and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and your grocery bags. Raw juices from these foods can contain harmful bacteria, which can spread to other foods. Consider placing these raw foods inside plastic bags to keep the juices contained.
- **Transport** food home right away and refrigerate or freeze perishables immediately to prevent any bacteria from rapidly growing in the food.

Thawing

Germs are comfortable and grow quickly in room temperature. Therefore, frozen food should never be thawed under room temperature! Use one or a combination of the following methods:

- **In the refrigerator:** Place the frozen bird in its original wrapper in the bottom of your refrigerator (40 °F or below). Allow approximately 24 hours per 4 to 5 pounds of turkey. A thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1-2 days.



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- **In cold water:** If you forget to thaw the turkey or don't have room in the refrigerator for thawing, don't panic. You can submerge the turkey in cold water and change the water every 30 minutes. Allow about 30 minutes defrosting time per pound of turkey. Cook immediately after thawing.
- **In the microwave:** Microwave thawing is safe if the turkey is not too big. Check the manufacturer's instructions for the size turkey that will fit into your oven, the minutes per pound, and the power level to use for thawing. Cook immediately after thawing.

Please stay tuned for next week's article about preparing, cooking and serving.