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NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Holiday Chill

The holidays are just around the corner and you may be thinking about that traditional holiday meal that you will serve your family. You may also be thinking about healthy choices to serve your family too. However, you may not be thinking about that pesky little bacteria bug that could make you and your family sick. The holidays are a time for fun and celebration, but it could be difficult to enjoy all the holiday cheer if you or your family are in bed with a foodborne illness. Foodborne illnesses are common around the holidays. With all the busy preparation during the holidays, proper food safety is key to keep your family healthy. All it takes are a few simple steps to avoid contaminating food and getting a foodborne illness.

The FDA uses these four basic guidelines to avoid a foodborne illness: clean, separate, cook and chill. Some of the best ways to avoid any foodborne illness during the holidays include:

- Chill all perishable foods such as produce, meat, fish, poultry and dairy products at least 40° F or below (most refrigerators are already set to this temperature).
- Wash all fruits and vegetables with running water.
- Keep all cream pies, cakes, cream cheese dishes, cold pasta dishes with meat, poultry, seafood, and dairy products refrigerated until serving time.
- Make sure that all quiches and soufflés are kept warm until serving time and refrigerate all leftovers immediately.
- Use pasteurized eggs and egg products for all baked goods and eggnog recipes.
- Use separate cutting boards for meat, poultry, and seafood and for fruits and vegetables.
- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparing fresh produce and meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
- Purchase pasteurized ciders and juices. Unpasteurized ciders and juices may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illnesses.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure the inside temperature of all meat items have reached a hot enough temperature to kill all harmful bacteria.
- Use the “2-hour rule.” Do not let foods sit out at room temperature for more than two hours. Be sure you keep track of how long foods have been sitting out, especially at buffets, and discard anything that has been left out for more than two hours. Remember to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.
- Use separate bowls and utensils to taste a food. Using the same utensils to taste a food that you use to stir or cook a food can transfer bacteria from the food to you or from you to the food.

Keep your family safe this holiday season and all year long by practicing good food safety habits. Parents and child care providers can learn more about healthy eating and food safety tips by contacting the University of California Cooperative Extension at (530)889-7350 or visiting us on the web at <http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu>.

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