

## Ten Tips for Safe Handling of Turkey

To ensure a healthy, safe and delicious turkey dinner, the Bernards Township Health Department recommends following safe food practices especially when handling poultry.

1. Whether you choose fresh or frozen turkey you must handle the raw turkey with careful attention.
2. Wash your hands using soap and water for twenty seconds both before and after you handle the turkey. Clean and sanitize any surface upon which the raw turkey is placed.
3. If you plan to use it within 1-2 days, store the turkey in a refrigerator that maintains a temperature of 40 F.
4. You can freeze a turkey, wrapped airtight, for up to one year. To defrost your turkey, here are two safe methods:
  - a. Place it in a refrigerator on a tray or plate to prevent the juices from contaminating other foods. Allow 1 day to defrost for every 5 pounds. You can leave the turkey in the refrigerator for an additional 1-2 days before cooking.
  - b. Place the sealed turkey in the sink and cover it with cold tap water. Change the cold water every 30 minutes. Allow about a half hour per pound. When thawed, cook promptly.
5. Stuff the turkey just before roasting. Do not stuff it the night before you plan to use it. Use only cooked meat, seafood and vegetables in preparing your stuffing. Use  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups of stuffing per pound of turkey.
6. Put turkey in 2-3 inch deep roasting pan with the breast side facing up. Cover the turkey lightly with a tent of foil.
7. Preheat your oven to 325 F. Roast the unstuffed turkey about 15 minutes per pound. If you stuff your turkey, roast the 20 minutes per pound. Start checking for doneness about a half hour before the end time.



**Cheryl C. Komline, MS, RD**  
Bernards Township Health Department  
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920  
P. 908.204.3069 F. 908.204.3075  
[www.bernardshealth.org](http://www.bernardshealth.org)

*Contractual Health Agency for:*  
Bernards Township  
Bernardsville Borough  
Chester Borough  
Long Hill Township  
Mendham Borough  
Mendham Township  
Peapack and Gladstone Borough

## Ten Tips for Safe Handling of Turkey

8. The only reliable way to tell when a turkey is done is with a meat thermometer. Using an oven-safe meat thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh, cook the turkey to an internal temperature of 180 to 185 F. Stuffing and side dishes should be at least 160 to 165 F.
9. Cooked turkey and side dishes should be served or refrigerated within 2 hours to maintain food safety. Safe food temperatures are stored in a refrigerator below 40 F or reheated to over 165 F.
10. Store cooked turkey in the refrigerator for up to 3-4 days. Immediately freeze any foods that you don't plan to eat right away.

Prepared by: Cheryl Komline, MS, RD, *Public Health Nutritionist*  
908-204-3069 or email her at [ckomline@bernards.org](mailto:ckomline@bernards.org).

### **For more in depth info on safe turkey preparation:**

- Visit the NJ Agricultural Extension Service website:  
<http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.asp?pid=E234>
- Get USDA Fact Sheet at:  
[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact\\_Sheets/Poultry\\_Preparation\\_Fact\\_Sheets/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Poultry_Preparation_Fact_Sheets/index.asp)
- For last minute problems call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline at:  
1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) or send Email to: [mpholine.fsis@usda.gov](mailto:mpholine.fsis@usda.gov)



**Cheryl C. Komline, MS, RD**  
Bernards Township Health Department  
Basking Ridge, NJ 07920  
P. 908.204.3069 F. 908.204.3075  
[www.bernardshealth.org](http://www.bernardshealth.org)

*Contractual Health Agency for:*  
Bernards Township  
Bernardsville Borough  
Chester Borough  
Long Hill Township  
Mendham Borough  
Mendham Township  
Peapack and Gladstone Borough