

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUNTY EXECUTIVE LATIMER REMINDS RESIDENTS TO CELEBRATE SAFELY
Westchester County Health Department Offers Healthy Holiday Tips

(White Plains, NY) – Westchester County Executive George Latimer reminds residents to plan ahead for a safe and healthy Thanksgiving celebration.

Latimer said: “Whether you take to the road or cook up a storm, to enjoy a healthy holiday, be sure to drive, cook and drink responsibly. Leave early to allow extra time for traffic, follow the Health Department’s food safety advice and let moderation be your guide.”

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said now that bivalent COVID-19 boosters are available for children ages 5 and older and can be given alongside annual flu shots, families should aim to get their whole families vaccinated as soon as possible.

Amler said: “Before you visit with older, more vulnerable relatives this holiday season, please schedule those vaccine appointments. COVID-19 boosters and flu shots are available at many area pharmacies, medical practices and through the health department. And anyone who is under the weather should stay home to avoid spreading germs to others.”

It’s also a good idea to take a COVID-19 test before gathering with family members outside your household. For a healthier holiday, the Health Department recommends residents go for a turkey trot, take a long walk or add some other exercise to their holiday traditions. When preparing the meal, boost flavor with herbs, skip the salt and cut down on the amount of fat and sugar in recipes.

Amler said: “To avoid germs, wash hands thoroughly after exchanging greetings or reading a menu, and before you take that first bite. With viruses circulating and flu season here, good hand hygiene is critical.”

Follow these food safety tips for a fabulous feast:

To thaw a turkey, the USDA recommends placing it in a refrigerator and allowing one day for every four to five pounds of weight. A 16-pound turkey will take four days to thaw. On Thanksgiving, remove your turkey from the refrigerator, but do not wash it -- this spreads germs onto kitchen surfaces.

- Keep raw turkey separated from all other foods at all times.
- Use separate cutting boards, plates, and utensils when handling raw turkey to avoid cross-contamination. Wash items that have touched raw meat with warm soap and water or in a dishwasher.
- Cook the turkey until it reaches 165 °F, as measured by a food thermometer. Check the turkey's temperature by inserting the thermometer in three places: the thickest part of the breast, the innermost part of the thigh, and the innermost part of the wing.

The Health Department recommends holiday hosts and their helpers follow these seven food safety tips:

- Wash hands and food-contact surfaces with hot soapy water thoroughly and often.
- Thaw turkey in a pan in the refrigerator, allowing 24 hours for every 5 pounds.
- Keep raw meat and poultry and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Rinse all fruits and vegetables in cool running water and remove surface dirt.
- Cook turkey and stuffing to an internal temperature of 165°F.
- Refrigerate turkey, stuffing and sides within two hours.
- Reheat leftovers to at least at least 165°F before serving. (Check the temperature with a metal probe thermometer.)

For COVID-19 vaccine information and more food preparation safety tips, go to www.westchestergov.com/health. The USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline can be reached at 1-888-674-6854.

About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just over a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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