

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Catherine Cioffi
Communications Director
Office - (914) 995-2932
Cell- (914) 954 -5579
CCioffi@westchestergov.com

County Executive George Latimer Reminds Residents To Celebrate Thanksgiving Safely

Westchester County Health Department Offers Healthy Holiday Tips

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

Latimer said: “I want to wish all our Westchester County residents a happy and healthy Thanksgiving holiday. Be sure to drive, cook and drink responsibly when traveling to celebrate with your family and friends. Leave early to allow extra time for traffic, follow the Health Department’s food safety advice, and let moderation be your guide.”

On Thanksgiving Day, the Health Department recommends holiday hosts and their helpers follow these food safety tips for a fabulous feast:

- Wash hands and food-contact surfaces with hot soapy water thoroughly and often.
- Plan ahead and thaw the 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 to 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.)

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, 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.”

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 as 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.

Now that updated monovalent COVID-19 vaccines are available and recommended for everyone six months and older, and can be given alongside annual flu shots, Amler said it is a good idea for the entire family to get vaccinated before large family gatherings.

Amler said: “Before you visit with older, more vulnerable relatives this holiday season, please schedule your vaccine visits, and if you are under the weather, stay home to help keep others healthy.”

COVID-19 boosters and flu shots are available at many pharmacies and medical practices. Residents can use the [Vaccine Finder Tool](#) to schedule a vaccine near them. The County Health Department offers COVID vaccines to children [eligible for the Vaccines for Children program](#) and adults who are uninsured or underinsured through the [Bridge Access Program](#) at our clinics. Call (914) 995-5800 to learn if we can help.

Before gathering with family members outside your household, Amler recommends taking a home COVID-19 test. Residents can order up to four free at-home COVID-19 test kits by mail. [To order, go to COVIDtests.gov.](#)

For a healthier holiday, go for a turkey trot, take a long walk or add some other exercise to your 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.

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.

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