

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WESTCHESTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE GEORGE LATIMER ENCOURAGES RESIDENTS  
TO CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY SAFELY**

***Westchester County Health Department Offers Safe Holiday Cooking and Celebrating Tips***

(White Plains, NY) – Westchester County Executive George Latimer encourages residents to keep their Thanksgiving celebrations small and as safe as possible this year and to follow the Health Department’s tips for a healthier holiday.

Latimer said: “This is the year to make your Thanksgiving gathering more intimate, and to cherish your immediate family members and traditions. Consider setting time for a virtual visit with distant relatives and friends. If you do invite others to your holiday table, spend some time outdoors and keep the windows open when you’re inside.”

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, offered some extra advice to reduce Covid-19 exposure:

- Open the windows -- the wider the better and as many as possible -- to promote cross-ventilation.
- Run your kitchen exhaust fan.
- Keep guests out of the kitchen.
- Wash or sanitize hands frequently.
- Have your guests wear a mask unless they are eating or drinking.
- Avoid passing platters from person to person.
- Designate one person with gloved hands to serve buffet style from a central location.
- Consider making side dishes in single-serve ramekins and using single service plates and utensils.
- Ask your guests to reduce their contacts and potential exposures for the two weeks prior to their visit.

- Remind your guests to stay home if they have any COVID symptoms or a fever, are awaiting COVID test results, or are under quarantine or isolation orders.
- Have your returning college student limit his or her exposure to others and get tested this week, next week and a day or two before returning home, wear a mask throughout their travel home when around others, whether by plane, train or car, with windows open.
- Invite your guests to wear masks and meet you for a walk, a turkey trot or a hike in a park.

Amler said: “It is especially important to keep uninvited germs out of your holiday meal, so wash your hands thoroughly when you arrive and before you take that first bite. Good hand hygiene can help reduce the risk of flu, Covid-19 and other respiratory illnesses.”

Restaurants have taken steps to increase safety, but outdoor dining remains preferable to indoors. When dining out, if you do not see a permit, contact the Health Department to assure the restaurant complies with State and County sanitary codes.

At home, when you remove your fresh or defrosted turkey from the refrigerator, do not wash it -- this spreads pathogens onto kitchen surfaces. Fully cook the turkey to kill bacteria that causes foodborne illness. The Health Department recommends holiday hosts and their helpers follow these 10 food safety tips:

- Wash hands and food-contact surfaces with hot water and soap thoroughly and often.
- Thaw turkey in a pan in the refrigerator, allowing 24 hours for every 5 pounds.
- Keep raw meat, poultry and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods.
- Use separate cutting boards, plates and utensils when handling raw turkey to avoid cross-contamination.
- Wash items that have touched raw meat with hot water and soap, or place them in a dishwasher.
- Rinse all fruits and vegetables in cool running water and remove surface dirt.
- Cook turkey and stuffing to 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.
- When preparing the meal, cut down on the amount of fat and sugar in recipes and boost flavor with fresh herbs instead of salt.
- 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 more food preparation safety tips, go to [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health). SDA Meat & Poultry Hotline: 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) USDA-FSIS: Chat live with a food safety specialist in English or Spanish at [AskKaren.gov](http://AskKaren.gov) ([En Español](#)), 10 a.m.—6 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. Web-based automated response system available 24/7.

### **About Westchester County**

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under 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](http://www.westchestergov.com)

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