

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT SHARES TIPS FOR A SAFE THANKSGIVING FEAST

Westchester County Executive George Latimer Encourages Residents to Celebrate Safely

(White Plains, NY) – Westchester County Executive George Latimer is reminding residents to set the table for a festive Thanksgiving feast, and to also celebrate safely.

Latimer said: “To celebrate Thanksgiving safely, be sure to drive, cook and drink responsibly. When traveling, leave early to allow extra time for traffic. When hosting, follow the Health Department’s food safety advice and when enjoying your meal, avoid excess and let moderation be your guide.”

If you are cooking the bird, defrost the turkey safely in a pan in the refrigerator over several days. Allow 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.

Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “Wash hands thoroughly after exchanging greetings and before you take that first bite. With viruses circulating and flu season here, good hand hygiene is critical.”

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.
- Keep raw meat, 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.)
- 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.

Amler recommends residents from ages six months and up get their annual flu shot and consider getting the latest COVID vaccine. Pregnant women should also consider an RSV vaccine, which can protect them and their newborns during the respiratory virus season.

Amler continued: “It’s a good idea to get these vaccines now, before large family gatherings, so that you can establish immunity before the holidays and before you visit with older, more vulnerable relatives this holiday season. Remember, if you are under the weather, stay home to help keep others healthy.”

COVID-19 vaccines 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 at our clinics. Call (914) 995-5800 to inquire about eligibility.

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

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