

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

Date: November 25, 2019
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**WESTCHESTER COUNTY EXECUTIVE GEORGE LATIMER REMINDS RESIDENTS
TO CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY SAFELY**
Westchester County Health Department Offers Safe Holiday Cooking Tips

(White Plains, NY) – Westchester County Executive George Latimer reminded residents to keep important cooking safety tips in mind as they prepare to celebrate Thanksgiving.

Latimer said: “Whether your holiday plans take you on the road or keep you in the kitchen, be sure to drive, cook and drink responsibly. Leave early and allow extra time for traffic, follow the Health Department’s food safety tips and avoid overindulging.”

To make the holiday healthier, the Health Department recommends residents go for a turkey trot, take a long walk or add some other exercise into their holiday tradition. When preparing the meal, cut down on the amount of fat and sugar in recipes and boost flavor with fresh herbs instead of salt.

When dining out, be aware that the Health Department inspects restaurants, which must prominently post their permit. If you don’t see a permit, contact the Health Department to assure the restaurant complies with State and County sanitary codes.

Commissioner of Health Sherlita Amler, MD said: “Wherever you celebrate, to keep germs out of your holiday meal, wash your hands thoroughly after exchanging greetings or reading a menu, and before you take that first bite. With flu season already underway and viruses circulating, good hand hygiene is important for everyone.”

On Thanksgiving, remove your fresh or defrosted turkey from the refrigerator. Don’t wash it -- this only spreads pathogens onto kitchen surfaces. To kill bacteria that causes foodborne illness, fully cook the turkey.

- 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 place them 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 kitchen 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 foods to proper temperatures. Turkey and stuffing must reach 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 more food preparation safety tips, go to 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 ([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

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