

Influenza (Flu) Prevention

The weather is getting colder, the nights are getting shorter, and it is time to start thinking about influenza (flu) prevention. Influenza is a virus that causes respiratory illness in humans and also affects many types of animals. This virus usually occurs in the late fall or early winter in the United States and can be spread from an ill person to other people by coughing or sneezing. Typically in Iowa, the first confirmed case of influenza is seen in the first week of December. Cases usually peak in late January.



There are several ways to prevent influenza, but perhaps the simplest way is to wash your hands and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer frequently. Also, staying home from work or school when you are ill and encouraging others to do the same will help with the spread of this virus. Another tip is to keep away from others that you know are ill. A distance of 3-feet will help reduce your risk of becoming ill. It is also recommended that everyone get the influenza vaccine however certain people are at risk for developing severe illness or complications from influenza and are strongly encouraged to get the influenza vaccine each year.

If you do happen to catch influenza, you will probably start to show symptoms within 1-5 days after exposure and it usually lasts for 2-7 days. The symptoms may include fever, cough, headache, muscle aches, and fatigue. Also, 1 in 4 children will experience nausea, diarrhea, or vomiting. If you have influenza, you would try to get plenty of rest and drink lots of fluids. Treatment for Influenza A and B is available by prescription through your local health care provider, but is only effective if taken within 48 hours of onset of symptoms.

For more information on influenza, visit the Iowa Department of Public Health's website at www.idph.state.ia.ua/adper/flu.asp.

Great American Smoke-Out—November 17, 2005

On Thursday, November 17th, the American Cancer Society is encouraging all smokers to put out their cigarettes for at least one day—and perhaps for a lifetime. The American Cancer Society recommends the following 5 Keys for Quitting:

1. Get Ready
2. Get Support and Encouragement
3. Learn New Skills and Behaviors
4. Get Medication and Use It Correctly
5. Be Prepared for Relapse or Difficult Situations



For more information from the American Cancer Society, visit www.cancer.org or call 1-800-ACS-2345. Visit the Tobacco Free Quad City website for information on quitting at www.tobaccofreeqc.org and click on the "Cessation/Quit Smoking" link on the left hand column.

Thanksgiving Food Safety

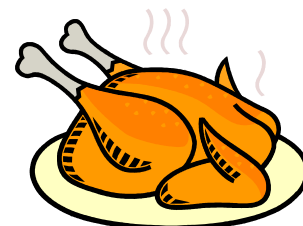
November has arrived and people are starting to think about preparing their Thanksgiving feast. Of course, the first item on the menu is probably turkey. Below are a few important tips to follow when preparing a turkey.



1. Take your turkey home immediately from the grocery store or the butcher shop and place it in the refrigerator or freezer.
2. A fresh turkey should be cooked within two days of bringing it home, or it should be frozen.
3. Turkeys may be thawed under refrigeration, in cold water, or in the microwave.
4. If thawed in the refrigerator, allow 24 hours for every five pounds.
5. If thawed in cold water, allow 30 minutes per pound and the water should be changed every 30 minutes.
6. If thawed in the microwave, check the microwave manufacturer's directions for the minutes per pound and the power level to use for thawing. Cook the turkey immediately after thawing.
7. Roast an unstuffed turkey in a 325°F oven until all parts of the turkey are at least 165°F and juices run clear.
8. If you are cooking a stuffed turkey, make sure that in addition to measuring the temperature of the turkey, you also measure the temperature of the stuffing. The stuffing should reach 165°F.
9. Cook stuffing outside the bird for optimum safety and uniform doneness.
10. If you do decide to stuff the turkey, mix the ingredients just before placing the stuffing inside the turkey.
11. Put the stuffing in the bird loosely—do not pack it in. Use approximately three-quarters of a cup of stuffing per pound of turkey.
12. Make sure the stuffing is moist because moist heat destroys bacteria more rapidly than dry heat.
13. Cut the turkey off the bones within two hours of cooking it and refrigerate it promptly.
14. Refrigerate the stuffing and the turkey separately in shallow containers at 35-40°F and use the leftovers within four days.
15. Cooked turkey may be frozen and kept in the freezer for three to four months

If you decided to buy a precooked turkey dinner, follow these important safety tips:

1. Make sure you pick the food up from the store hot and keep it hot.
2. If you are going to eat the food within two hours, place the food in the oven at a temperature that will keep it above 140°F.
3. If you are going to eat the food later, it will be safer and taste better if you do the following:
 - a. Remove the stuffing from the turkey and refrigerate it.
 - b. Cut the turkey off the bone, slicing the breast meat, but leaving the wings and legs whole and then place in the refrigerator.
 - c. Place all of the side dishes in the refrigerator.
 - d. When you are ready to eat, reheat everything to 165°F.



To learn more about food safety, visit www.scottcountyiowa.com and click on "food safety" under the Environmental Health heading on the left hand column.