



# HSS Safety Message

Thanksgiving is a holiday that brings friends and family together to share a good meal, conversation and laughter. But Thanksgiving also comes with several health hazards, including an increased chance of fires, food poisoning and choking. Take a few minutes to review these Thanksgiving Day safety tips, and enjoy the holiday without worry.

## Thanksgiving Day Safety Tips

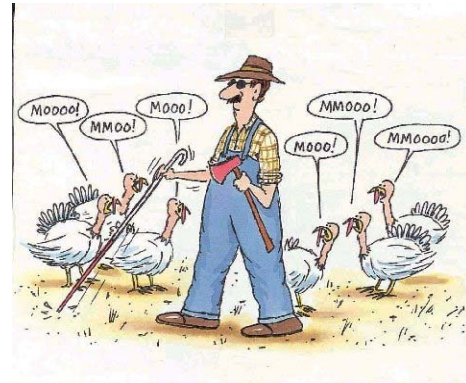
### *Fire*

The U.S. Fire Administration reports that Thanksgiving Day has more than 4,000 fires. The average number of cooking fires doubles on the holiday. In addition to installing a fire detector in the kitchen, there are several easy ways to avoid fires:

Don't leave the kitchen while frying and grilling. Use a timer and do kitchen checks when simmering, baking, broiling and roasting. If deep frying a turkey, keep the fryer outside, away from walls, fences and other structures. Also keep the fryer away from moisture to avoid burns from steam and spattering oil.

Keep pot holders and food wrappers 3 feet away from the stove or other hot surfaces. Kids should stay 3 feet away too. Make sure the handles of pots and pans are facing inward. Avoid loose clothes, especially those with long sleeves, while cooking. And make sure all candles and smoking materials are out after the guests leave.

### *Turkey*



Eating undercooked turkey is another Thanksgiving health problem. If a turkey is thawed at a temperature above 40 degrees Fahrenheit, salmonella or other bacteria that cause food poisoning can grow.

Safely cooking a turkey starts with correct defrosting. There are three methods for safe defrosting. The turkey can be thawed in the refrigerator---one day for every 5 lbs. of the bird. The turkey can be submerged in water if it is in leak-proof packaging---30 minutes for every pound. The water should be changed every half hour. It's also safe to defrost a turkey in a microwave. Remove any packaging and follow the manufacturer's instructions.

With all three methods it's important to cook the turkey immediately after thawing. Don't slow cook or partially cook the turkey, and check the temperature with a meat thermometer to determine if it's done. Even if the turkey came with a pop-up thermometer, it's necessary to check the innermost part of the thigh and wing, and the thickest part of the breast. The turkey needs to be at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit (and the stuffing, too)

Let the turkey rest before carving. This gives the juices time to set.

## Choking

The most common cause of choking is talking while eating. If a person is unable to cough, breathe or speak, the first thing to do is call 911. Next, the Red Cross recommends a technique called FIVE-and-FIVE for choking victims.

The first step is giving the choking victim five sharp blows on the back, using the heel of the hand. If the obstruction is not dislodged by this move, the next step is to give the victim five quick, upward abdominal thrusts.

Some people run from the table when they start choking. It's important to stay with other people so they can give assistance. If the victim is alone, he can give himself the five abdominal thrusts using his hand or by pressing his abdomen firmly against the back of a chair.

## Leftovers

Eating Thanksgiving leftovers that have been improperly stored can also lead to food poisoning. Leftovers need to be put away within two hours after serving the food. (This includes pumpkin pie.) They go in the refrigerator if they are going to be eaten within three days; otherwise they go in the freezer. Food should be stored in shallow containers. Meat should be removed from the bone before being put away.

Reheated leftovers should be cooked to 165 degrees Fahrenheit. Gravy should be brought to a vigorous boil.



## Pets



Thanksgiving brings health hazards to dogs and other pets as well as humans. Don't give turkey bones to pets. Turkey bones and other bird bones are hollow, which makes them likely to splinter. This can cause tears in an animal's esophagus, stomach or intestines.

Fatty holiday foods, like turkey skin and gravy, can contribute to pancreatitis. More pets are brought to vets for pancreatitis after their people have had a party or holiday dinner.

Be careful about leaving chocolate candies out (or kids dropping candy on the floor). Chocolate can cause illness and death in dogs. In addition, dogs shouldn't be fed grapes, raisins, onions, alcohol or anything with caffeine. It's also important to keep the string used to tie the turkey and other food wrappings out of reach of pets.

Dogs also tend to be excited when there are lots of people in the house. When they are excited, they often eat too quickly, and this can lead to bloating, a very dangerous condition. Feed your dog before the guests arrive and don't let them be too active before or after eating. *By Melinda Dean/eHow Contributing Writer*

## Thanksgiving Day Trivia

**The first Thanksgiving in 1621 was believed to have lasted how many days?**

- a. 1
- b. 3
- c. 7

**Be the first person to reply with the correct answer to [carol.sikora@hq.doe.gov](mailto:carol.sikora@hq.doe.gov) and receive a prize ☺**