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DPHSS Offers Tips for Safely Reheating and Storing Thanksgiving Leftovers

After the big feast, you realized that you cooked too much food, or that you ordered too much at the restaurant. What should you do with the leftover food? Safe handling of leftovers is very important to reduce foodborne illness. The Division of Environmental Health of the Department of Public Health and Social Services would like you to follow the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Safety and Inspection Service's recommendations for handling leftovers safely.

- After the meal, immediately refrigerate leftovers such as meat, dressing, gravy or soups in uncovered small shallow containers so they cool quickly.
- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- Store all leftovers separately, especially turkey meat, stuffing and gravy.
- Use refrigerated leftovers within two (2) to three (3) days or freeze right away for later consumption.
- Reheat solid leftovers, such as turkey and potatoes, to at least 165 °F. Bring gravy, sauce, and soups to a rolling boil.
- Eat refrigerated turkey within three (3) to four (4) days; stuffing and gravy within one (1) to two (2) days.
- If travelling with leftovers, wrap hot food in foil and heavy towels, or carry in insulated container to maintain a temperature of at least 140 °F. Store cold foods in a cooler with ice or freezer packs to maintain a temperature of 40 °F or below.

Understanding how to deal with leftovers can help you to stay healthy. For more information, please call the Division of Environmental Health at 735-7221.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Gillan', written over the printed name and title.

JAMES W. GILLAN
Director