



# Livingston County Health Department ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

## Serve Foods Safely This Holiday Season

Holiday meals with friends and family are fun, but beware unwanted party guests. Food poisoning, caused by foodborne germs, can crash your party and make your guests sick. When cooking, preparing, or serving food for large groups, it is important to keep food safe. Follow the food safety tips below from the United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service.

### Clean

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds before and after handling any food.
- Wash food-contact surfaces (cutting boards, dishes, utensils, countertops) with hot, soapy water after preparing each food item.
- Rinse fruits and vegetables under cool running water and use a produce brush to remove surface dirt.
- Do not rinse raw meat and poultry before cooking to avoid spreading bacteria to areas around the sink and countertops.

### Separate

- When shopping in the store, storing food in the refrigerator at home, or preparing meals, keep foods that won't be cooked separate from raw eggs, meat, poultry or seafood—and from kitchen utensils used for those products.
- Consider using one cutting board only for foods that will be cooked (such as raw meat, poultry, and seafood) and another one for those that will not (such as raw fruits and vegetables).
- Do not put cooked meat or other food that is ready to eat on an unwashed plate that has held any raw eggs, meat, poultry, or seafood.

### Cook

- Use a food thermometer to make sure meat (beef, pork, lamb: 145 °F, ground meats: 160 °F), poultry (165 °F), and fish (145 °F) are cooked to a safe internal temperature.
- Bring sauces, soups, and gravies to a rolling boil when reheating.
- Cook eggs until the yolk and white are firm. When making your own eggnog or other recipe calling for raw eggs, use pasteurized shell eggs, liquid or frozen pasteurized egg products, or powdered egg whites.
- Do not eat uncooked cookie dough, which may contain raw eggs.

### Chill

- Refrigerate leftovers and takeout foods—and any type of food that should be refrigerated, including pie—within two hours.
- Set your refrigerator at or below 40°F and the freezer at 0°F. Check both periodically with an appliance thermometer.
- Allow enough time to thaw food. For example, a 20-pound turkey needs four to five days to thaw completely in the refrigerator.
- Do not taste food that looks or smells questionable. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Leftovers should be used within three to four days, unless frozen.

**Pro turkey tip:** To check a turkey for safety, insert a food thermometer into the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. The turkey is safe when the temperature reaches 165°F. If the turkey is stuffed, the stuffing should be 165°F.



**Source:** United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service. (n.d.). Holiday Food Safety Tips. Retrieved from: [https://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Holiday\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Tips.pdf](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Holiday_Food_Safety_Tips.pdf)

## Have you tested your well water?

Drinking water has the potential to expose you and your family to a variety of contaminants and germs. Public water supplies are monitored and tested to protect residents' health. However, private wells do not receive the same monitoring. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services has recently developed guidance for homeowners to follow for proper maintenance and testing of drinking water wells. This guidance can be found on our website at: <https://bit.ly/2BTfT4O>

Often times, a drinking water problem cannot be detected by look, taste, or smell. Testing is the only reliable way to know your water is safe. The Livingston County Health Department recommends private well owners test their wells annually, using a certified drinking water laboratory. Below are some common substances a well-water test may include.

### *Bacteria*

Coliforms are bacteria that are always present in the digestive tracts and wastes of humans and animals. They can also be found in the plants and soil. Coliforms are not a health threat on their own, but they can be a sign that your well has been contaminated by septic or other waste material, which could expose your family to waterborne germs and illnesses. You can find more information at: <https://bit.ly/325x91v>

### *Fluoride*

Fluoride is found naturally in rocks and soil. According to the American Dental Association (ADA), low concentrations of fluoride can prevent tooth decay and strengthen teeth. It is especially important for parents of young children to test their water for fluoride to ensure children are benefiting from optimal levels. Learn more about fluoride in drinking water at: <https://bit.ly/2Pz8bow>

### *Nitrates*

Nitrates are the most commonly detected well water contaminant. They are found naturally in water, soil, plants, and food. Nitrates are also commonly found in fertilizers, livestock waste, and septic tank waste. Swallowing large amounts of nitrates can cause methemoglobinemia. This condition affects the blood's ability to carry oxygen and can be fatal to infants less than 6 months of age. Testing for nitrates is important because levels can fluctuate over time. Learn more at:

<https://bit.ly/2JzQP7a>

### *Arsenic*

Arsenic is found in mineral deposits and dissolves in groundwater. Michigan has naturally higher arsenic levels in groundwater. Arsenic in drinking water may have harmful health effects depending on how much you consume and how sensitive you are to it. You can find more information about arsenic at: <https://bit.ly/2q7xMdq>

LCHD staff are available for consultation to determine which tests may be right for you. For more information about well maintenance and testing, please visit: <https://www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/wells.aspx>

**Source:** Water Systems Council. (2019). Water Well Care: wellcare® Info Sheets. Retrieved from: [www.watersystems council.org/water-well-help/wellcare-info-sheets/](http://www.watersystems council.org/water-well-help/wellcare-info-sheets/)

## LIVINGSTON COUNTY TICK SURVEILLANCE

This past summer, the Environmental Health Division participated in the Vector Borne Disease Surveillance and Prevention Program. This is a grant-funded program led by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. One of program's goals was to identify populations of blacklegged (deer) ticks that could potentially spread Lyme disease. To collect samples of ticks, Environmental Health (EH) staff completed eight tick drags across various Livingston County locations. Blacklegged ticks were found throughout the county.

As part of the program, EH staff also offered free tick identification and consultation services for residents in Livingston County. Eighty-four ticks were brought into the health department and identified within 24 hours or less. Approximately 15% were blacklegged and 85% American dog tick. Two ticks were sent to the state lab for Lyme disease testing. Of those, one tested negative and results for the second tick are still pending.

To learn more about ticks, please visit: [www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/Ticks.aspx](http://www.livgov.com/health/eh/Pages/Ticks.aspx)



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