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**Contact:** Gary Sky, Public Information Officer, 720-200-1529

## **Safe Turkey Preparation Tips and Healthy Thanksgiving Ideas**

Millions of Americans are planning a traditional Thanksgiving holiday dinner of turkey with all the trimmings, and following a few simple health precautions during the holiday can keep everyone at the dinner table and out of the emergency room.

“Foodborne illness is a concern due to undercooked poultry and improper sanitation,” according to Jill Bonczynski, director of Nutrition at Tri-County Health Department. “When it comes to food temperatures and storage my advice is to keep it hot, keep it cold, or do not keep it at all. And always follow the directions on the turkey package for proper defrosting, cooking, handwashing and safe handling to prevent the cross-contamination of bacteria from raw meat.”

During Thanksgiving, many people gorge themselves on huge portions and then return a few hours later for leftovers. “When it comes to nutrition and weight control, turkey is very nutritious, a lean protein choice and also low-fat if you don’t eat the skin, so it is one of the best choices available,” said Bonczynski. “The key is to fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables, one-quarter with whole grains, one-quarter with turkey, and enjoy smaller portions of desserts.”

Healthy Thanksgiving side dishes include vegetables, salads, cranberries and fruits. Cooks can cut calories by serving smaller portions of gravy on the potatoes and making the stuffing with lower-calorie ingredients. Guests can enjoy the festivities and have no idea that they are really eating a healthy meal. For dessert, pumpkin pie or fresh fruit with a low-fat dessert topping is a better choice than high-calorie pecan or apple pie.

Thanksgiving leftovers don’t have to be a problem either. Simple solutions include removing the fatty skin from the turkey and using low-fat mayonnaise on whole-grain bread. One could also consider replacing mayo with avocado, and add some tomatoes and greens to improve nutritional value.

Before or after your meal, also engage in a family walk or fun game of football to get some physical activity.

Many people also consume more alcohol than usual during the holiday season. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Thanksgiving holiday has the largest number of

traffic deaths, with 60 percent of the deceased not wearing their safety belts, and 42 percent killed in crashes involving a drunk driver.

So eat wisely, drink sensibly and drive carefully. By eliminating some preventable hazards, the holiday will remain a happy and healthy celebration instead of turning to tragedy.

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