

## Tips for a Safe Thanksgiving Dinner

With Thanksgiving upon us, consumers will be gathering with family and friends for the big meal. Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation suggests the following tips for choosing and preparing your holiday turkey:

When purchasing a turkey, allow one pound of turkey per person. Buy your fresh turkey one to two days before you plan to cook it. If you choose a frozen turkey, keep it frozen until you are ready to thaw it.

### Thawing a Frozen Turkey

There are three ways to thaw your turkey safely — in the refrigerator, in cold water, or in a microwave oven.

1. In the refrigerator: Allow 24 hours for every five pounds. Keep the turkey in its original wrapper and place on a tray to catch leaks. A thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for one to two days.
2. In cold water: Allow 30 minutes per pound. Make sure the turkey is wrapped in leak-proof packaging before submerging it in cold tap water. Change the water every 30 minutes. Turkeys thawed by the cold water method should be cooked immediately because conditions were not temperature controlled.
3. In the microwave: Make sure that your turkey will safely fit in your microwave and defrost it according to the manufacturer's instructions. Cook turkey immediately after microwave thawing because some areas of the turkey may become warm and begin to cook during microwave thawing.

### Cooking the Turkey

Using a food thermometer is the best way to determine if the turkey is done. Every part of the turkey and the center of the stuffing should reach a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F.

### Storing Leftovers

Discard any turkey, stuffing, side dishes, and gravy left out at room temperature longer than two hours. Divide and refrigerate leftovers, and consume within three to four days or freeze them for later use.

## For More Information

Call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at (888) 674-6854 and/or click on the links below.



[Poultry Preparation](#)

[Thermometer Placement and Temperatures](#)

[Turkey Basics: Safe Cooking](#)