

**NEWS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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**Food Safety for the Holidays**

Food is a central part of holiday festivities, and the closeness created over shared meals boosts our mental and physical health. Whether you are an experienced cook, a first-time party host, or bringing a dish to a potluck dinner, Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) recommends following a few guidelines to make sure that holiday meals are free from the germs that cause foodborne illness.

**Cheese Trays and Buffets** - If you're planning a buffet at home and are not sure how quickly the food will be eaten, keep buffet serving portions small.

- Prepare several small platters and dishes ahead of time and replace the served dishes with fresh ones throughout the party.
- Store cold back-up dishes in the refrigerator and keep hot dishes in the oven set at 200 °F to 250 °F prior to serving. This way, your late arriving guests can safely enjoy your food safely.
- Take temperatures often - Hot foods should be kept at an internal temperature of 140 °F or warmer. Cold foods should be kept at 40 °F or colder.
- Don't add new food to an already filled serving dish.
- Remember the 2-Hour Rule: Discard any perishables left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours unless you are keeping it hot or cold.

**Say No to Raw Dough** - When making cookies, brownies, cakes, or bread, do not be tempted to taste a bite before it's fully baked. You can get sick after eating or tasting raw (unbaked) dough or batter. When preparing and handling raw dough, use these guidelines:

- Don't taste or eat raw (unbaked) dough or batter. This includes dough or batter for cookies, brownies, cakes, pie crusts, tortillas, pizza, biscuits, pancakes, or crafts made with raw flour, such as homemade play dough or holiday ornaments.
- Don't let children handle raw dough, including play clay and dough for crafts.
- Do not use raw homemade cookie dough in ice cream.
  - Cookie dough ice cream sold in stores contains dough that has been treated to kill harmful germs.
- Wash your hands, bowls, utensils, and countertops after handling raw flour, eggs, or dough.

For more information about food safety, contact Lori Rowley at 308-345-4223 or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854). Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th (one block north of Arby's) in McCook and 418 North Spruce in Ogallala. Information can also be found on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube.

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