

Food safety counts, especially during the holiday season

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Hand washing is key to preventing the spread of foodborne illnesses, expert advises

(HealthDay)—In the frenzy of holiday celebrations and gatherings, it's easy to forget the basics of food safety, so one expert offers some simple reminders.

"Food safety tips are always important, and especially during the holidays when cooking for a crowd," Dana Angelo White, a nutritionist and Quinnipiac University's clinical assistant professor of [athletic training](#) and [sports medicine](#), said in a university news release. "Proper hand washing is a must!"

Simply washing your hands is an important way to stop the spread of germs, Angelo White advised. She noted that providing guests with festive and scented soaps will encourage them to keep their hands clean in the kitchen.

Angelo White provided other tips to help those preparing meals ensure holiday [food safety](#), including:

- **Don't cross contaminate.** Using separate cutting boards for [raw meats](#) and seafood is key to preventing the spread of harmful bacteria. Raw meats, poultry and seafood should also be stored on the bottom shelf in the refrigerator so that drippings from these products do not contaminate other foods. It's also important to avoid rinsing raw meat in the sink. Contrary to popular belief, research suggests, this practice can spread bacteria rather than get rid of it.
- **Consider time and temperature.** A meat thermometer should always be used to check that meat and poultry have been cooked to the proper internal temperature. Any dishes made ahead of time should also be reheated thoroughly before they are eaten. Once [food](#) has been served, it should not remain out on the table at room temperature for more than two hours. Any foods that have been sitting for two hours need to be refrigerated or reheated.
- **Treat cuts and burns properly.** Direct pressure should be applied to any cuts that occur during cooking. If possible, elevate the cut to help stop the bleeding. If bleeding doesn't stop, a cold compress could help. If not, it's time to visit the emergency room. Do not apply butter to a burn. Instead, run cool water over the affected area as quickly as possible. Minor cuts should be covered with a bandage. Anyone who continues to cook with a burn should wear a glove over the injured hand.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration provides more tips on [holiday food safety](#).

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