

November 21, 2023

West Central Florida Health Departments Encourage a Safe 2023 Holiday Season



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Pasco County, Fla.— The West Central Florida Health Departments encourage residents and visitors to enjoy a safe and healthy holiday season. From traveling to decorating and cooking, the holidays are time for family and friends to come together and celebrate. The Department advises Floridians to follow these tips to ensure their safety.

Food Safety

- Thaw meat in the refrigerator or in a sink filled with cold water before cooking. The water needs to be changed every 30 minutes. Do not thaw it on the counter, as foodborne bacteria can quickly grow.
- Keep raw foods separate from cooked foods and wash your hands, utensils, and surfaces frequently to avoid cross contamination.
- Use a food thermometer to ensure foods are cooked to proper internal temperatures.
- Once the food is prepared, keep hot foods above 140 degrees Fahrenheit and cold items below 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Hot and cold leftovers need to be refrigerated within two hours of being served.
- Do not consume raw batter or dough that is made with flour or eggs to avoid harmful bacteria like [E. coli](#) and salmonella.
- Keep hot foods insulated and place cold foods on ice or gel packs while in the car.

Decoration Safety


- Avoid placing poisonous plants in areas accessible to children and pets. Holly berries, mistletoe, amaryllis, and English ivy are a few poisonous plants that are popular around the holidays.
- Secure and cover extension cords to prevent trips and falls.
- Place candles where they cannot be knocked over. If a fire occurs, do not pour water on the candle. Have a fire extinguisher nearby to use instead.



- Be cautious when using spray-on artificial snow. Inhalation can cause irritation to the lungs.
- Keep fireworks away from people, houses, and flammable material. Never point or throw fireworks at another person.

Travel Safety

- Ensure that children have proper car seats. Set up a seat check [here](#).
- Make sure to be well rested before getting behind the wheel.
- Designate a sober driver.

About the Florida Department of Health

The Department, nationally accredited by the  [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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