



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **SLVHD issues a “Left-over Alert”**

### **400,000 cases of food poisoning caused by holiday leftovers each year**

(Salt Lake County)—For many people, Thanksgiving leftovers are even better than the big dinner. The Salt Lake Valley Health Department (SLVHD) is reminding people that how you treat that cooked turkey and other leftovers on Thanksgiving Day can determine how safe they will be to eat later.

However, despite annual food safety reminders, the U.S. continues to see over 400,000 cases of food poisoning caused by improper cooling and storing of fully-cooked turkey each year.

Bryce Larsen, Food Protection Manager for the SLVHD says that although you might have taken all of the necessary precautions to ensure food safety in preparing the Thanksgiving meal, the risk of food poisoning still exists. Consumers need to guard against left-out leftovers.

“One again, SLVHD is issuing a ‘leftover alert’ to remind holiday chefs that food safety doesn't stop once the meal is prepared,” Larsen explained. “How you handle the food *after* the meal is equally important,” he added. “And reheating will not always destroy the culpable bacteria, so consumers must act to prevent it.”

To help residents prevent such hazards, Larsen recommends the “2 hours/2 inches/4 days” formula:

- Prepared foods should not be left out of the refrigerator for more than **2 hours**.
- To speed chilling, foods should be refrigerated at a shallow depth of about **2 inches**.
- Leftovers should be eaten within **4 days** of the feast. Freeze foods that will be kept longer.

Remember the old rule: Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Harmful bacteria multiply quickly in the “danger zone”—between 40 and 140 degrees F, so foods should not stay unrefrigerated for longer than two hours.

Additionally, it's unsafe to store food in large chunks that don't cool quickly enough. Immediately after the meal, remove stuffing from turkey cavity and refrigerate, and place mashed potatoes, gravy and other vegetables in separate shallow containers—about two inches deep. Cut turkey meat from the carcass (slicing breast meat, rather than leaving in single chunks) and refrigerate.

Health department officials also recommend eating the turkey and other cooked dishes within four days. Leftovers can be frozen, preferably right after the big feast is over. Turkey pieces will maintain quality for four months; stuffing and gravy only for one month. Cooked dishes made from leftover turkey will hold for four to six months.

For more food safety visit the SLVHD website at [www.slvhealth.org](http://www.slvhealth.org) or call 801-313-6670.

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