

November 27, 2024

DOH-Bay Encourages a Safe 2024 Holiday Season

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Bay County, Fla.— The Florida Department of Health in Bay County (DOH-Bay) encourages 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. DOH-Bay 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 car seat [check](#).

- Make sure to be well rested before getting behind the wheel.
- Designate a sober driver.

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