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Holiday Hazard: More than One in Five Americans Admit Their Kitchen Would Fail a Food Safety Inspection

Water Quality & Health Council Offers Free Food Safety Tips

WASHINGTON, DC (November 15) -- With the holiday cooking season soon upon us, more Americans (37 percent) are worried about becoming sick of an annoying relative than they are of getting sick from the food on the table (31 percent). But findings from the same new survey indicate their relatives should be the least of their concerns this Thanksgiving as more than one in five Americans (22 percent) admit their kitchen would fail a food safety inspection.

The [new survey](#)ⁱ, sponsored by the Water Quality and Health Council, also found that less than half of Americans (47 percent) typically use a disinfectant or disinfecting wipes after using the kitchen counter, despite knowing that chlorine bleach kills germs that cause foodborne illnesses.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) estimates that 76 million Americans get sick from foodborne illnesses every year and more than 300,000 of them are hospitalized. The [CDC](#) also warns that raw foods of animal origin (including turkey) are the most likely to be contaminated.

“Holiday cooking introduces increased risks of foodborne illness as raw meats and vegetables are processed on kitchen surfaces, and Americans are not properly disinfecting these surfaces,” says Linda Golodner, president emeritus of the National Consumers League.

“Practicing good kitchen hygiene is not very complicated,” says Golodner. “Thoroughly wash surfaces with hot, soapy water and rinse – then apply a simple chlorine bleach solution and let air dry to properly disinfect the area. Follow these steps before and after handling raw foods on kitchen surfaces.”

Just one-half tablespoon of bleach in one half-gallon of water effectively kills common foodborne germs on kitchen surfaces. Golodner says that most people may not realize this though – with nearly half (47 percent) of those surveyed overestimating the amount of bleach per gallon of water needed to effectively kill common foodborne germs.

The survey also found that by more than a seven to one margin, Americans trust chlorine-based disinfectants over green cleaners to kill germs. “Chlorine-based disinfectants are EPA-registered and proven to destroy the germs that spread foodborne illness,” noted Golodner.

The Water Quality & Health Council lists the following guidelines for safe food handling:

- **Clean** – wash all food contact surfaces with hot, soapy water followed by disinfecting with 1/2 tablespoon chlorine bleach in 1/2 gallon of water
- **Separate** – keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry and seafood
- **Cook** – to kill any bacteria that might be present, thoroughly cook meat, poultry and eggs to the appropriate temperature
- **Chill** – refrigerate leftover perishables at 40 degrees within 2 hours of cooking or serving

This holiday season, the Water Quality and Health Council is offering consumers a free refrigerator magnet featuring simple directions for disinfecting kitchen surfaces. The magnet may be ordered on the Council’s “Disinfect for Health” [website](#).

Twitter: [@wipeoutgerms](#)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Wipe-Out-Germs/171509132865706>

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The Water Quality & Health Council (WQHC) is a body of independent scientific experts, health professionals and consumer advocates who serve as advisors to the Chlorine Chemistry Division of the American Chemistry Council, an industry trade association.

¹ The online survey was conducted using the field services of TNS reaching a national sample of 1,000 Americans ages 18+ balanced to census. The margin of error for the total sample is ±3.1 percent.