

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – November 24, 2003

FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

(LOS ANGELES), November 24 – While Thanksgiving traditionally begins the holiday season, it may be tough to enjoy the festivities if you or someone in your family comes down with a case of food poisoning.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, an estimated 76 million cases of food-borne illness occur each year in the United States. Among these cases, more than 300,000 people will need hospitalization and 5,000 will die.

“During holiday food preparations, it’s easy with so much cooking to do, to get distracted and forget to take precautions when it comes to food-safety,” said Rekha Murthy, M.D., Director of Hospital Epidemiology at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. “It’s important to keep surfaces that have come in contact with uncooked meat sanitized and to wash and cook the meat thoroughly.”

To ensure a holiday meal that is fun and safe for everyone, the Department of Epidemiology at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center offers the following tips:

1. Do not cook stuffing inside turkey; prepare it separately to avoid cross contamination from raw or under-cooked meat. Insert thermometer into the thickest part of the turkey, between thigh and breast, and make sure that it reads 180° F.
2. Frozen turkeys should be defrosted in the refrigerator.
3. Refrigerate all left-overs as soon as possible and leave at room temperature no longer than two hours. Food should be re-heated to 180° F and ice should be added hourly to the cold food, unless it is returned to the refrigerator. Make sure to use thermometer to check temperature of all foods.
4. If you are ill while preparing food, be sure to wash hands thoroughly before and after handling food to protect friends and family that will eat your delicious holiday meal.
5. Clean all surfaces that are exposed to meat thoroughly, with a disinfectant type of soap and water.

6. Thoroughly clean out the inside of your refrigerator with disinfectants every six months, regularly throwing away all foods that smell bad and/or have changed color consistency.
7. Always check the sell-by and expiration dates before purchasing groceries. The sell-by date is the last date the product should be purchased. The expiration date is the last date the product should be consumed.

Cedars-Sinai Medical Center is one of the largest non-profit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For the fifth straight two-year period, Cedars-Sinai has been named Southern California's gold standard in health care in an independent survey. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthrough in biomedical research and superlative medical education. Named one of the 100 "Most Wired" hospitals in health care in 2001, the Medical Center ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities.

###

If you have received this news release in error and do not wish to receive future advisories, or if they should be directed to someone else in your organization, please call 1-800-396-1002. Alternatively, you may fax your updated information or your request for removal from our list to 808-263-3364 or e-mail it to sandy@vancommunications.com.