

Don't poison your family these holidays

Before tucking into Christmas lunch this year, spare a thought for food storage and preparation to avoid food poisoning.

Christmas is always a danger period for food poisoning—the weather is hot and the fridge filled with enough food to feed an army.

Community Safety and Health Committee chairman Cr Dale Last, said the preparation of Christmas foods was one of the biggest causes of food poisoning and could even lead to hospitalisation.

“There are some simple but extremely important tips that people need to remember when preparing and storing food over the Christmas period to avoid a very unpleasant end to festivities,” Cr Last said.

“One of the first things to consider is whether you have enough fridge space for all of your critical food items, then prioritising what absolutely must have refrigeration and what can do without.”

Fridges should maintain a temperature of 5°C or less — things like soft drink, jams and pickles that don't need refrigeration over the short term can be put in an esky with ice or stored in the cupboard.

» **Avoid keeping food in the temperature 'danger zone'** between 5°C and 60°C — only defrost food in the fridge or microwave, not on the bench top.

» **Prepare food as close to eating as possible** and keep cutting boards and utensils separate for raw meats and ready-to-eat food.

» **Wash hands** with warm water and soap, and dry using single-use paper towels, not tea towels.

» **Divide up pre-cooked food** into small or shallow sealed containers and put in the fridge or freezer.

» **Keep seafood cold** until serving time.

» **Defrost the Christmas turkey in the fridge**, but make sure it is completely defrosted in the centre before cooking. Use a meat thermometer to check that the temperature in the thickest part reaches 75°C.

» **Store leftover Christmas ham in a ham bag** soaked in water and vinegar or covered with a clean cloth — it will last for several weeks.



Food hygiene and safety is needed at home as well as at commercial food outlets.

Christmas security hints for you and your home

Make sure no-one sneaks down your chimney uninvited by checking you have followed some simple security measures.

CHECK THE LOCKS » Ensure doors and windows are fitted with key operated locks and put them to good use before you leave your home or go to bed each night.

LIGHT DARK AREAS » Install motion-sensor lights by the front door and down dark sides of the house to discourage night time visitors.

KNOW THE NEIGHBOURS » Establish friendly relationships with all adjacent neighbours and agree to keep an eye on each others homes.

HAVE A HIGH VISIBILITY HOME » Trim back foliage and consider alternatives to panelled fencing so neighbours and passers by may keep an eye on your home.

NUMBER IT » Make sure your home's street number is clearly visible for police and emergency crew.

DON'T MAKE IT EASY » Consider how you would enter your home if locked out. Chances are an intruder would use a similar method. Light these options. Secure ladders, wheelie bins, outdoor furniture and anything that may provide a leg-up. Don't hide keys in obvious places such as in pot plants, under welcome mats, or above the door frame.

LOCK AWAY TOOLS » The contents of your shed or garage may be just as valuable as the contents of your home. Tools found in these places may also be just what an intruder needs to make getting into your home that little bit easier. Make sure you lock the shed and garage when you go out.

FAKE IT » Leave a light and the radio or television on when you go out so the house doesn't appear empty. If you're going away for extended periods ask a neighbour or friend to collect your mail, water the garden and park in the driveway.

INSTALL AN ALARM » Install a security alarm, and ensure it is serviced regularly.

ENGRAVE VALUABLES » Engrave your valuables with your driver's license number or date of birth. This makes it harder for thieves to sell these items and easier for the police to identify them.

GIVE FAIR WARNING » Display warning signs that let intruders know you have an alarm, a dog in the yard or your property engraved. This may deter them from targeting your home.

ENSURE YOU'RE INSURED » Be sure to obtain home and contents insurance and be aware of any security requirements your insurer demands.

KEEP AN INVENTORY » Have a list of all your valuables, their make and model, purchase dates and whether they're engraved. It is a good idea to keep photos of these items too, for ease of identification.

Summer set to sizzle with School Holiday Program

The summer school holiday program will take Townsville by storm this year, with an amazing line-up of boredom busting activities right throughout the holidays.

Events have been planned in locations across the city from December 12 until January 23, for preschoolers to young adults, and will provide opportunities to have fun, explore creativity, or just chill out and relax.

There are plenty of activities for younger kids, ranging from craft and science workshops to come and try sports days, dive in movies and more for kids up to 12.

Major events for teenagers include gigs with headliner Behind Crimson Eyes, pool parties, sports days, laser skirmish, street art and skating workshops and much, much more!

There's no excuse not to check out what's cool for kids this summer – jump onto council's website at www.townsville.qld.gov.au or pick up the full program from your closest customer service centre at Walker Street or Thuringowa Drive.

NOTE: Some activities do require bookings, parental supervision or a small fee. Please see the program for full details.

