



Holiday Hand Safety 101: Hand Surgeons Offer Tips for a Safe Carving Season

Nothing says “Thanksgiving” like football, family and the enticing aromas of turkey, stuffing, yams and pumpkin pie. But no matter what’s included in a Thanksgiving spread, one dish nobody anticipates is a hand injury. This holiday season, the American Society for Surgery of the Hand cautions carvers to take steps to carve the main course and not their own hands.

Every year during Thanksgiving, and throughout the holiday season, people sustain hand injuries while preparing their holiday feast. From cutting open pumpkins to carving the mouthwatering centerpiece, hand injuries are all too common. Fortunately, these injuries are avoidable.

According to Reid Abrams, MD, a member of the American Society for Surgery of the Hand, holiday hand injuries are not exclusively linked to carving turkeys, hams, and roasts. “Many hand injuries also occur during post-meal clean-up,” says Abrams.

“Care needs to be taken when washing dishes — particularly soap-covered, slippery glasses. I’ve also treated many tendon and nerve injuries that were caused by crystal breaking while washing glasses by hand.”

Don't let your turkey day celebrations go fowl this year because of a hand injury.

Follow these easy tips and get your bird on the table in time so guests can start gobbling:

- Never cut towards yourself. One slip of the knife can cause a horrific injury. While carving a turkey or cutting a pumpkin your free hand should be placed opposite the side you are carving towards. Don't place your hand underneath the blade to catch the slice of meat.
- Keep your cutting area well-lit and dry. Good lighting will help prevent an accidental cut of the finger and making sure your cutting surface is dry will prevent ingredients from slipping while chopping.
- Keep your knife handles dry. A wet handle can prove slippery and cause your hand to slip down onto the blade resulting in a nasty cut.
- Keep all cutting utensils sharp. A sharp knife will never need to be forced to cut, chop, carve or slice. A knife too dull to cut properly is still sharp enough to cause an injury.
- Use an electric knife to ease the carving of the turkey or ham.
- Use kitchen shears to tackle the job of cutting bones and joints.
- Leave meat and pumpkin carving to the adults. Children have not yet developed the dexterity skills necessary to safely handle sharp utensils.
- Lastly, should you cut your finger or hand, bleeding from minor cuts will often stop on their own by applying direct pressure to the wound with a clean cloth.

Visit an emergency room or a hand surgeon if:

- Continuous pressure does not stop the bleeding after 15 minutes
- You notice persistent numbness or tingling in the fingertip
- You are unsure of your tetanus immunization status
- You are unable to thoroughly cleanse the wound by rinsing with a mild soap and plenty of clean water

Learn more about the American Society for Surgery of the Hand and hand surgery or visit our Find a Hand Surgeon service to locate a physician near you.

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