

# Food Safety for Families

## Chill

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### Keep Cold Foods Cold, Keep Hot Foods Hot!

Dear Parents,

Keeping foods cold is very important to prevent harmful bacteria from growing. When you return from the grocery store, immediately refrigerate or freeze foods such as eggs, meats, and anything else perishable. Never let raw foods (eggs, meats, poultry, or fish), fresh cut vegetables or fruits, or cooked food sit at room temperature for more than 2 hours before refrigerating or freezing (one hour when the temperature is above 90°F). Keep all perishable foods chilled right up until serving time.

### Did you know that 23% of household refrigerators are not cold enough?

The proper temperature to set a refrigerator at is **between 34-40°F**, and a freezer should be set at **0°F or below**.

### Refrigerator Thermometer

Use a refrigerator thermometer to make sure the temperature is consistently 40°F or below. But do not go too low, as you approach 32°F, ice crystals begin to form and this will lower the quality of some foods. Keeping your foods at temperatures **below 40°F** is



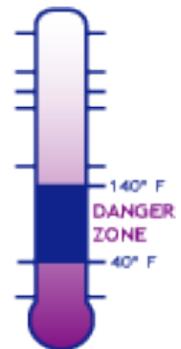
one of the easiest ways to slow the growth of bacteria and prevent food borne illness from occurring. Refrigerator or freezer temperatures never destroy disease causing bacteria or spoilage bacteria that are present in the foods. The lower temperature does slow these bacteria from growing and multiplying. Slowing bacterial growth will decrease the risk of food borne illness for your family.



### The Temperature Danger Zone

Bacteria grow fastest at temperatures between 40°F and 140°F, which is known as the “Temperature Danger Zone”.

**Keep cold foods below 40°F and keep hot foods above 140°F** to stay out of the “Temperature Danger Zone”. Bacteria will not multiply in the colder temperatures of a refrigerator or freezer, or at temperatures above 140°F.



**Did you know that in just 7 hours 1 bacteria can grow to 2 million bacteria?!**



## CHILL



### FightBac!®

Bacteria (germs), viruses and parasites are everywhere in the environment! They are organisms that you cannot see, smell, or taste. In fact, they can contaminate food and cause life-threatening illness. Foodborne illness (food poisoning) can strike anyone, especially young children, pregnant women (it endangers their unborn babies too), older adults, and persons with weakened immune systems.

### Proper Thawing of Food

There are 3 Safe Ways to Thaw Food:

1. **In the Refrigerator**
2. **In Cold Water**
3. **In the Microwave**

The safest method for thawing **ALL** foods is in the refrigerator. Plan ahead, as some foods may take 1-2 days to thaw. Thaw meat and poultry in airtight packaging in cold water if it will be used immediately. If you thaw food in cold water, change the cold water every 30 minutes. Thaw food in the microwave only if you plan to cook it immediately.



**Never thaw any food item at room temperature!** If food is left to thaw at room temperature, the surface of the food warms enough for bacteria to grow and multiply on the surface. For example, never set a frozen food on a countertop to thaw! Do not thaw foods in hot water. Bacteria grow at dangerously fast rates in the Temperature Danger Zone (between 40°F and 140°F). Proper thawing of food is extremely important to slow bacterial growth.

### Cooling Foods to Store

Cooling food properly is one of the easiest ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

- **Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quick cooling.**
- **You can place loosely covered foods in the refrigerator while still warm; cover when food is completely cool.**
- **Stack food items so air can circulate around them.** Refrigerators that are too tightly packed do not cool quickly.
- **Use or discard refrigerated food on a regular basis** to minimize over-packing refrigerators.
- **Be aware of how long foods have been in your refrigerator.** Label foods with the date it was prepared or a throw away date.

**When in DOUBT,  
Throw it OUT!**

