

# Thawing Meat and Poultry Safely

**Do you thaw meat or poultry by sitting it on your counter or in the sink? If you do, you could be putting you and your family at risk for getting a food borne illness.**

Meat and poultry products can be expensive. To save money buy meat in bulk. Divide it into smaller portions and freeze to use for later meals. To freeze meat and poultry products, use freezer wrap, containers, or plastic bags made for the freezer. When getting ready to use frozen meat, it is very important to thaw it safely.



**Thawing meat properly is very important to prevent food borne illness. There are ONLY three ways to safely thaw meat.**

- **In the refrigerator**
- **Under COLD running water**
- **In the microwave on defrost**

## In the refrigerator

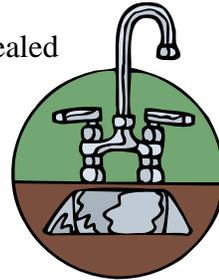
- Use a refrigerator thermometer to be sure the refrigerator temperature is consistently 40°F or below.
- Place frozen meats and poultry products on a plate or cookie sheet in your refrigerator to prevent juices from dripping onto other foods.
- Place thawing foods on the bottom shelf or below ready to eat foods. This way the raw juices do not drip onto ready to eat foods.
- Plan ahead when thawing in the refrigerator; it usually takes at least 24 hours to completely thaw.
- Different sizes of meat or poultry packages will require different amounts of time to completely thaw. For example, one pound of hamburger will take less time than larger cuts of meat, such as a pot roast.
- Cook meat and poultry products within the following time frame, once they have been completely thawed in the refrigerator.
  - Ground meat should be cooked within 1-2 days
  - Roasts and steaks should be cooked within 3 days
  - Poultry should be cooked within 1-2 days



**Know how. Know now.**

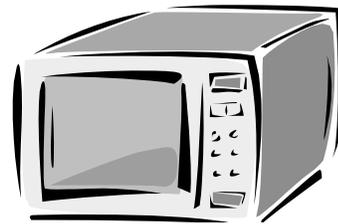
## Under COLD running water or in a cold water bath

- When thawing meat with cold water, place the meat or poultry in a sealed watertight plastic bag.
- Place plastic bag in a container or clean sink filled with cold water.
- Replace the water every thirty minutes to keep the water cold and the thawing process safe.
- Once thawed, foods should be cooked immediately.
- Different amounts of time are needed for different types of meat and poultry.
- A 1-2 pound package of beef or poultry takes approximately 1 hour to thaw.
- A 3 or more pound package of beef or poultry takes approximately 2-3 hours to thaw.



## In the microwave on defrost

- Thawing meat and poultry in the microwave is the quickest method.
- To thaw meats in the microwave, remove food from the package. Place the meat or poultry in a microwave safe container. Do not use foam trays or plastic wraps because they are not heat stable at high temperatures.
- Follow the manufacturer's directions for thawing. The thaw or defrost settings may vary between microwaves.
- Once thawed, foods should be cooked immediately.



## The Temperature Danger Zone:

- The Temperature Danger Zone is the range of temperatures where bacteria grows easily and quickly.
- The Temperature Danger Zone is between 40-140°F.
- Keep cold foods in the refrigerator at 40°F or below or in the freezer at 0°F to avoid the Temperature Danger Zone.
- Keep hot foods at 140°F or above to avoid the Temperature Danger Zone. Use a crock-pot, oven, or stove to keep hot foods hot.
- Never use raw meat or poultry if it has set out at room temperature for more than two hours.



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