

Food Safety for Families

Refrigerator Food Safety

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Dear Parents,

What's growing in your refrigerator? Cleaning the refrigerator is not first on our list of things to do but it is important to keep food safe for our families. Wipe up spills when they happen help prevent bacteria (germs) from growing. Use hot, soapy water to clean up any spill, then rinse with clean water.

Here are some good "chill" rules to keep your food safe to eat.

- ▶ Refrigerate perishable foods right away. Store hot foods in small, shallow containers to speed cooling.
- ▶ Make sure you do not pack your refrigerator with too much food. Air needs to move around food to keep it cold.
- ▶ If your refrigerator has a special drawer for meat, use the drawer to keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood away from other perishable foods to prevent cross-contamination.
- ▶ It is best NOT to store perishable foods on the refrigerator door. Eggs should be stored in their carton on a shelf. Milk will last longer when stored inside the refrigerator compartment.

Keeping the Refrigerator Clean

Once a week, check for perishable foods that should be thrown out. Give the shelves a quick wipe to keep them clean. Keep fresh poultry and ground meat up to 2 days, fresh meat up to 5 days, and most leftovers will keep 3 to 4 days.



Do you ever think about your refrigerator? Most of us just expect it to work, keeping our food cold and safe to eat. It's important to know the temperature of your refrigerator. **It should be at or below 40°F.**



You can buy a refrigerator thermometer at your local grocery or hardware store.



Temperature and time cause bacteria to grow, which is why it is so important your refrigerator be cold enough and for you to not keep leftovers too long.



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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.

Cleaning the Entire Refrigerator

1. Turn off the refrigerator.
2. Throw out old or spoiled food.
3. Place perishable food into a cooler to keep it cold or frozen.
4. Remove shelves and drawers from the refrigerator and freezer.
5. Wash shelves and drawers with hot, soapy water and rinse with clean water and dry with a soft cloth.
6. Wipe down the interior sides and bottom of the refrigerator and freezer.
7. Replace the shelves and drawers.
8. Put food back into the refrigerator or freezer.
9. Wipe off the exterior of the refrigerator with a soft cloth.
10. Wipe dust and lint from the front grill.
11. Several times a year, clean the condenser coil with a brush or vacuum cleaner to remove dirt and lint.
12. Turn on the refrigerator.



Listeria is a bacterium that can grow at refrigerator temperatures. Pregnant women, young children and people with weakened immune systems are at greater risk of Listeriosis.

To help prevent foodborne illnesses from *Listeria*:

1. Keep the refrigerator at 40⁰F (4⁰C) or below.
2. Use ready-to-eat, refrigerated foods as soon as possible. Check labels for expiration dates.
3. Clean the refrigerator regularly.

To Remove Refrigerator Odors Try the Following Tips. (Procedures may need to be repeated several times.)

1. Sprinkle fresh coffee grounds or baking soda in an open container or pan. Leave for several days.
2. Fill the refrigerator with crumpled up newspaper. Close the door and leave for several days. Remove newspapers and clean with vinegar and water.
3. Wash insides of refrigerator with baking soda and water.