



**Go 40
or BELOW**
A COLD FRIDGE HELPS KEEP FOOD SAFE

**Keep Home Refrigerator
at 40° F or Below**



**Refrigerate Foods
Within Two Hours**




Thaw Foods Properly



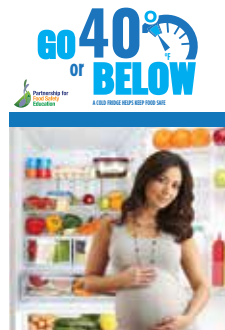
Temperatures of 40° F or below will slow the growth of foodborne bacteria, which can grow rapidly at warmer temperatures. It's important to chill foods promptly and properly to prevent the growth of harmful microbes.

Keep Home Refrigerator at 40° F or Below

- A constant home refrigerator temperature of **40° F or below** is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and slow the growth of harmful bacteria.
- Use a **refrigerator thermometer** to ensure the temperature is consistently 40° F or below. Refrigerator thermometers are tools that stay in your refrigerator to display actual temperatures (separate from refrigerator dials).
- **Don't go too low:** As temperatures approach 32° F, ice crystals can form and lower the quality of foods.
- **Keep your refrigerator clean, too:** To prevent the spread of harmful bacteria, wipe spills immediately. Regularly clean the inside of your fridge with hot water and liquid soap, and dry with a clean cloth or paper towels.
- For more information on safe refrigeration temperatures, check out our **Go 40° F or Below fact sheet** and special brochures for **expecting mothers** and **seniors** at fightbac.org.



1. Follow thermometer manufacturer instructions for ideal placement.
2. Make sure the thermometer reads 40° F or below. Some events may cause temporary readings over 40° F, such as:
 - Initial placement
 - Door open for an extended time
 - Hot foods recently placed inside
 - Automatic defrost cycles: Check temperature as soon as it turns on, when it's at its highest temp.



Refrigerate Foods Within Two Hours

- Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods and leftovers within **two hours** of purchase or use. If the temperature is 90 ° F or above, cut this time down to one hour.
- Separate large amounts of leftovers into **shallow containers** for quicker cooling.
- **Do not overstuff your refrigerator.** Cold air must circulate to keep food safe.
- **Know when to toss:** you can't tell by looking or smelling whether harmful bacteria have started growing in your leftovers or refrigerated foods. Check out the **Safe Storage Times** chart for storage guidelines of different foods.



Hit the Road Cold

- When traveling, be aware that time, temperature and a cold source are key.
- Always use ice or ice packs. A full cooler will maintain cold temperatures longer than a partially filled one.
- For more information, check out our **Food Safety on the Move fact sheet.**

Storage Times for the Refrigerator and Freezer

These short but safe time limits for home-refrigerated foods will keep them from spoiling or becoming dangerous to eat. The guidelines for freezer storage are for quality only. Frozen foods remain safe indefinitely.

| CATEGORY | FOOD | REFRIGERATOR (41 F OR BELOW) | FREEZER (0 F OR BELOW) |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Salads | Egg, chicken, ham, tuna and macaroni salads | 3-5 days | Does not freeze well |
| Hot dogs | Opened package | 1 week | 1-2 months |
| | Unopened package | 2 weeks | 1-2 months |
| Luncheon meat | Open package or deli sliced | 3-5 days | 1-2 months |
| | Unopened package | 2 weeks | 1-2 months |
| Bacon and sausage | Bacon | 7 days | 1 month |
| | Sausage, raw — from chicken, turkey, pork, beef | 1-2 days | 1-2 months |
| Hamburger and other ground meats | Hamburger, ground beef, turkey, veal, pork, lamb and mixtures of these | 1-2 days | 3-4 months |
| Fresh beef, veal, lamb and pork | Steaks | 3-5 days | 6-12 months |
| | Chops | 3-5 days | 4-6 months |
| | Roasts | 3-5 days | 4-12 months |
| Fresh poultry | Chicken or turkey, whole | 1-2 days | 1 year |
| | Chicken or turkey, pieces | 1-2 days | 9 months |
| Soups and stews | Vegetable or meat added | 3-4 days | 2-3 months |
| Leftovers | Cooked meat or poultry | 3-4 days | 2-6 months |
| | Chicken nuggets or patties | 3-4 days | 1-3 months |
| | Pizza | 3-4 days | 1-2 months |

[Download and print this chart here.](#)

Thaw Foods Properly

Never thaw food at room temperature – harmful bacteria can multiply rapidly at room temperature. Choose one of these options to thaw food safely:

- **Thaw food in a refrigerator.** This is the safest way to thaw meat, poultry and seafood. Place the frozen food on a plate or pan to catch any juices that may leak.
- **Thaw in cold water** if food will be cooked immediately. Replace the water every 30 minutes so the food continues to thaw in cool water.
- **Thaw in the microwave** if food will be cooked immediately. Follow the instructions in your owner's manual for thawing.
- If you don't have time to thaw food: It is safe to **cook foods from a frozen state**, but the cooking will be approximately **50 percent longer** than fully thawed meat or poultry. Use a food thermometer to ensure food is cooked to safe internal temperature.

THE FOUR WAYS TO FIGHT BAC!

