



**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**

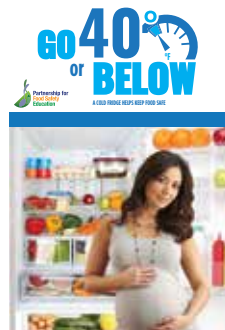
 **Temperatures of 40° F or below will slow the growth of foodborne bacteria,** which can grow rapidly at warmer temperatures. It's important to chill foods promptly and properly to prevent the growth of harmful microbes.

## 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](http://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!

CLEAN



SEPARATE



COOK



CHILL

