



Food Safety Grab and Go Lesson

Keep Food Safe: Control Food Temperatures

Children can become sick with a foodborne illness if they eat food that has harmful bacteria growing in it. Controlling temperature is one of the most important ways to control the growth of bacteria in food. The Temperature Danger Zone (40 °F to 140 °F) is the temperature range in which bacteria grow rapidly; therefore, it is important to limit the time foods spend in this zone.

Since child care providers serve a vulnerable population, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommends following the consumer-based Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) guidelines on temperature control when storing, preparing, and serving food. Check with your sponsor, state agency, and local or state public health department for guidelines specific to your location.

Food Storage

Always cover, wrap, or seal and date food in containers for storage. Place a thermometer in the storeroom, refrigerator, and freezer where it can easily be seen to read and record temperatures. Temperatures should be recorded at the beginning and end of the day on a dated temperature log.

Storeroom

Store dry food in a cool place, like a cabinet or storeroom. Store food at least 6 inches above the floor. The room temperature should stay between 50 °F and 70 °F.

Refrigerator

Store food in your refrigerator at 40 °F or below. Store raw meats on a baking sheet or shallow pan to catch drips on the lowest shelves. The juices from raw meat can drip onto other food and spread bacteria, which could cause foodborne illness.

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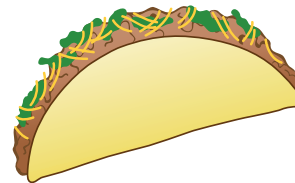
Freezer

Store frozen foods at 0 °F or below.

Food Preparation

Thaw frozen food the safe way.

- Thaw in the refrigerator, maintaining the food temperature at 40 °F or below.
- Thaw completely submerged under cold, running water.
- Thaw food in the microwave. When thawing food in the microwave, cook food immediately after thawing.



**HOT FOODS
HOT!**

**COLD FOODS
COLD!**



Plan your food preparation so food is at room temperature for a very short time before it is refrigerated, cooked, or served.

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

- Cold foods must be kept at 40 °F or below.
- Hot foods must be kept at 140 °F or above.

Follow your state's guidelines for food safety temperatures .

Use a metal-stem thermometer or digital thermometer to test the internal temperature of foods. For more information on using a food thermometer, see CARE Connection Food Safety Lesson, *How to Use a Metal-Stem Thermometer*.

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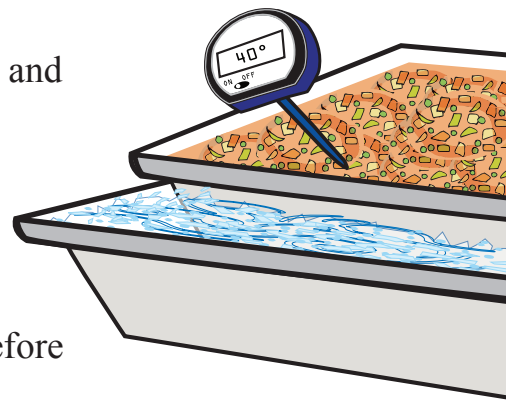
Cooking foods to the correct internal temperature will destroy most bacteria, even though it may not kill toxins or bacterial spores. The USDA FSIS provides recommendations for cooking temperatures and times to destroy organisms of concern. Be sure to check what local requirements are for temperatures. Here are some examples.

Temperature and Time	Products
140 °F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready-to-eat foods taken from a commercially processed, hermetically sealed package • Vegetables (frozen or canned) • Pre-cooked ham (to reheat)
145 °F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh beef, veal, or lamb
160 °F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground meat (including ground beef and sausage) • Egg dishes • Fresh pork; fresh ham (labeled: cook before eating)
165 °F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poultry, stuffing, ground turkey or chicken • Casseroles • Leftovers

Food Service

At mealtime, use common sense.

- For best quality, prepare foods close to serving and do not hold hot foods for long periods of time.
- Let hot food cool slightly before serving the children so that it does not burn their mouths.
- Do not hold hot foods too long before serving.
- Keep cold foods in the refrigerator until just before serving.



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Food left in the temperature danger zone (40 – 140 degrees F) for more than 4 hours can cause illness. Throw away any food left for more than 2 hours. If the temperature is 90 °F or higher, throw away food after 1 hour.

Remember the old saying, “When in doubt, throw it out.”

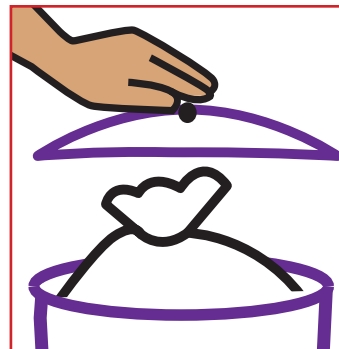
Leftovers

Hot food in shallow pans can be placed directly in the refrigerator OR it can be chilled quickly before refrigerating.

Quick Cooling Tips

Cool leftover hot foods quickly to keep them safe. Use the following practices to cool hot food.

- Use shallow pans no more than 2 inches deep.
- For large pots of hot food, transfer the hot food into several shallow pans. Never refrigerate hot foods in large, deep containers because the food in the center will stay warm longer, giving bacteria more opportunity to grow.
- Stir often.
- Cut food into small pieces to speed cooling.
- Place shallow pan in a second pan with ice in the bottom of the second pan.
- Check temperature.
- Discard perishable food that has been left at room temperature for more than 2 hours (1 hour if it is 90 degrees F). This includes any food accidentally left in the car or on the counter overnight.



**When in
doubt, throw
it out!**

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Storing

Refrigerate or freeze leftover food within 2 hours in clean, shallow, covered containers. Label the container with the name of the food and the date the food was prepared. Refrigerator and freezer storage times vary. Please refer to www.fsis.usda.gov for a cold storage chart.

Do not mix leftovers with freshly made food.

Store unused baby food in the original jar, labeled with the date opened and covered tightly, in the refrigerator. Never feed an infant baby food directly from the baby food jar. Place the appropriate serving in a dish and feed the infant from the dish. Throw away any baby food left in dishes.

Serving

Serve leftovers as soon as possible. Do not serve leftovers after four days in the refrigerator.

Cooked leftovers must be reheated until the internal temperature is 165 °F.

Bring gravies and sauces to a rolling boil.

After a leftover food has been reheated and served, throw away any food not eaten the second time.

Remember to check with your sponsor, state agency, and local or state public health department for the current food safety guidance that you must follow.

Sources:

National Food Service Management Institute. (2009). *Serving safe food in child care: Trainer's guide*. University, MS: Author.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service. (2008). *Kitchen companion: Your safe food handbook*. Retrieved December 2010, from www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Kitchen_Companion.pdf.