

# Thawing and Cooling Foods Safely

Harmful germs can grow in foods like meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, eggs, cooked cereals, and cooked vegetables, which can make you sick. These germs grow very fast when food is left in the temperature danger zone between 4°C and 60°C.

It is important to thaw and cool these types of foods safely to make sure harmful germs don't grow and make you sick.

## How to safely thaw foods



Thaw food in the fridge! Although it may take longer, it is the safest way to thaw food.

Remember to always store raw meat on the bottom shelf, below any ready-to-eat foods like fruits and vegetables.



Thaw food under cold, running water in the sink.

After food is properly thawed, cook it or keep it in the fridge at 4°C or less (39 °F), until you are ready to cook or reheat it.



Thaw food in a microwave and make sure to cook foods to the appropriate internal temperature, right away after it's thawed.



Cook foods from frozen.

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### Always cool food **as quickly as possible**.

Harmful germs can grow on food even after it has been cooked! If you cool foods too slowly from cooking temperatures (74°C or hotter) to fridge temperatures (4°C), there is a higher chance of these germs growing.

Once cooked, foods must cool to 20°C (room temperature) within 2 hours and then to 4°C (fridge temperature) within another 4 hours.

### How to safely cool foods

- Divide food into smaller portions or pieces (large food items take longer to cool).
- Add ice, instead of water as an ingredient, or place the container in an ice bath and stir.
- Store food in shallow pans and put them on the top shelves of the fridge.
  - Cover the pans after the food has cooled.
  - Don't stack pans so that cold air can move freely around them.



### Storage of cooled foods

After food is properly cooled, label and store it with the date and time it was prepared. Throw away any food that isn't eaten within 3 to 4 days. If you are unsure how long food has been left at room temperature, do not eat it.

**If in doubt, throw it out.**

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Contact us at 1-833-476-4743 or [submit a request online](#) at [ahs.ca/eph](https://ahs.ca/eph).

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