

Department of Health

health

Your guide to food safety



Ten easy steps to safe food



1. Buy from reputable suppliers with clean premises.
2. Avoid spoiled foods, foods past their use-by dates or foods in damaged containers or packaging.
3. Take chilled, frozen, or hot foods straight home in insulated containers.
4. Keep raw foods and ready-to-eat foods separate.
5. Avoid high-risk foods left in the Temperature Danger Zone for more than four hours.
6. Keep high-risk foods out of the Temperature Danger Zone. Keep chilled foods cold at 5°C or colder and hot food hot at 60°C or hotter.
7. Thoroughly wash and dry hands when preparing food.
8. Use separate and clean utensils for raw foods and ready-to-eat foods.
9. Cook minced meats, poultry, fish and sausages thoroughly.
10. When in doubt, throw it out.

Enjoy your food

Don't let it turn nasty.

Victorians enjoy food. We produce some of the highest quality and freshest foods in the world.

We love to buy and cook food to eat at home, or outdoors on picnics, camping trips and barbecues, or to take to work and school.

Victorian and Australian food safety laws are designed to ensure the food you buy is safe.

All Victorian food businesses such as supermarkets, delis, butchers, fishmongers, take-aways and restaurants, have to comply with these laws and standards by selling food that is safe to eat and free of any contamination.

Even the best food in the world can turn nasty if poorly handled, stored or cooked.

Once the food is in your hands it's up to you to keep your food safe to eat.

This booklet will explain how simple practices can ensure the food that you buy and take home to prepare for yourself, your family or friends remains safe and enjoyable.



Food businesses have a responsibility to sell food that is safe to eat.

High-risk food



Ready-to-eat foods are foods that can be eaten without further preparation or cooking such as pre-prepared salads, take-aways and prepared sandwiches.

Bacteria grow and multiply on some types of food more easily than on others. The types of foods which bacteria prefer include:

- meat
- poultry
- dairy products
- eggs
- smallgoods
- seafood
- cooked rice
- cooked pasta
- prepared salads, coleslaws, pasta salads
- prepared fruit salads.

Did you know?

Food poisoning bacteria are often naturally present in food, and in the right conditions a single bacterium can grow into more than two million bacteria in just seven hours.

Keep your food in the 'right' zone!

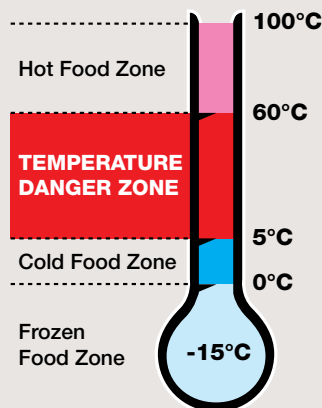
A basic rule-of-thumb is to keep high-risk foods in the right temperature zone for as long as possible.

When shopping:

- Buy your chilled and frozen foods towards the end of your shopping trip.
- Hot chickens and other hot foods should also be purchased later in your trip and kept separate from cold food.

When storing and transporting food:

- keep chilled food at 5°C or colder
- keep frozen food frozen solid
- keep hot foods at 60°C or hotter
- throw out high-risk food left in the Temperature Danger Zone for more than four hours
- consume high-risk food left in the Temperature Danger Zone for more than two hours – don't keep it for later.



Use a fridge thermometer to check the temperature in your fridge. The temperature should be below 5°C.

Keep the freezer temperature around -15°C to -18°C.

Choose food carefully



Once you purchase food, the safety of that food also becomes your responsibility.

- Only buy from reputable suppliers with clean and tidy premises.
- Check use-by dates and labels, avoid food past its use-by dates.
- Check food labels for allergen and nutritional information.
- Avoid products in damaged, dented, swollen or leaking cans, containers or other packaging.
- Avoid food that seems spoiled, such as mouldy or discoloured product.
- Check that staff use separate tongs when handling separate food types.
- Only buy eggs in cartons which identify the supplier – avoid cracked or soiled eggs.
- Avoid high-risk chilled and frozen foods that have been left out of the fridge and freezer.
- Avoid hot foods, like take-aways, that are not steaming hot.
- Avoid ready-to-eat foods left uncovered on counters.
- Prevent meat, chicken or fish juices leaking onto other products.

If you have serious concerns with the way food is handled, stored or prepared by a business, contact your local council health department.

Get food home quickly

Once you purchase food, the safety of that food also becomes your responsibility.

- If you have purchased hot, chilled or frozen foods, you should get them home as quickly as possible.
- For trips longer than about 30 minutes, or on very hot days, it's a good idea to take an insulated cooler or bag with an ice pack, to keep chilled or frozen foods cold.
- Consider placing hot foods in an insulated container for trips longer than about 30 minutes.
- Consider wrapping hot foods in foil.
- Once you arrive home, immediately transfer chilled and frozen food into your fridge and freezer.



Use an insulated container or bag to transport chilled or hot food.

Take care eating outdoors



Take extra care when preparing, storing and handling food to eat away from home.

Follow these tips to keep food safe and enjoyable when eating outdoors or taking a packed lunch to work or school.

- Cut meats into serving-size pieces before leaving home, and have all salads ready to eat.
- Put raw meats and high-risk foods into separate leak-proof containers and into insulated coolers.
- Place containers with raw meats at the bottom of an insulated cooler and keep separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Avoid packing food that has just been cooked or is still warm, unless you can keep it out of the Temperature Danger Zone. Refrigerate overnight before packing.
- Pack plenty of ice packs around chilled foods. Frozen drinks can serve as ice packs, especially in school lunches.
- Don't place ready-to-eat food into containers used for storing raw food without thoroughly washing and drying the containers first.
- Consider using disposable wipes if there is no safe water for hand washing.

Store food well

Keep food safe by:

- keeping high-risk chilled food in the fridge
- keeping frozen foods frozen hard
- storing foods in clean, non-toxic, food storage containers
- storing cooked foods separately from raw foods
- storing raw meats, seafood and chicken at the bottom of the fridge, in sealed or covered containers
- storing left-overs in the fridge. Packaged food and food from cans and jars can become high-risk once opened
- not storing food in opened cans
- avoiding egg, dairy and meat products past their use-by dates
- cover food in leak-proof containers with tight-fitting lids or wrap in foil or plastic film
- when in doubt, throw it out.

Did you know?

You can keep your food fresh for longer and save on energy costs by ensuring the door seals on your fridge are in good condition.



Cover food in leak-proof containers with tight-fitting lids or wrap in foil or plastic film.

Wash hands when preparing food



Wash hands for at least 30 seconds in warm, soapy water before preparing food.

- Wash hands for at least 30 seconds in warm, soapy water before preparing food.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food and after handling raw meats, chicken, seafood, eggs and unwashed vegetables.
- Dry your hands with clean towels or disposable towels.
- If you have any cuts or wounds on your hands, cover them with waterproof wound-strips or bandages.
- Wear clean, protective clothes like an apron when preparing food.
- If you feel unwell, let someone else prepare the food.

Did you know?

Wet hands are more likely to transmit bacteria. After washing your hands take the time to dry them thoroughly.

Keep it clean and separate

- Keep raw foods separate from ready-to-eat foods.
- Use separate and clean utensils and equipment for ready-to-eat food.
- Don't use the same equipment and utensils for raw foods and for ready-to-eat foods, without thoroughly cleaning them first.
- Thoroughly clean and dry cutting-boards, knives, pans, plates, containers and other utensils after using them.
- Use hot soapy water to wash things and ensure they are thoroughly dry before using them again.
- Use fresh clean tea-towels or disposable towels to dry utensils and equipment, or allow them to air-dry.
- Use a dishwasher with appropriate detergents to wash and dry utensils and equipment.
- Rinse raw fruits and vegetables with clean water before using them.
- Don't allow pets around areas where food is prepared or stored.
- Remove pests and vermin from where food is prepared or stored.



**Use different
clean utensils,
cutting-boards
and containers for
different foods.**

Thaw it right – use the fridge

Bacteria can grow in frozen food while it is thawing, so keep frozen food out of the Temperature Danger Zone.

- Unless instructions direct otherwise, thaw frozen food in the fridge or use a microwave oven.
- If instructed on packaged frozen food, prepare and cook the food as directed, straight from the freezer.
- Defrost frozen meats, fish and poultry thoroughly before cooking.
- Keep defrosted food in the fridge until it is ready to be cooked.
- If defrosting using a microwave oven, cook the food immediately after defrosting.
- If you are using a microwave oven, speed-up the thawing by separating defrosted portions from still-frozen portions.
- Avoid re-freezing thawed food.



Use the fridge to thaw frozen food.

Cook it right

One of the most important things you can do to stop high-risk food turning nasty is to cook it thoroughly.

- Use a meat thermometer to help you get the temperature right.
- Thoroughly cook foods made from eggs such as omelettes and baked egg custards.
- Cook poultry until the meat is white – there should be no pink flesh.
- Cook hamburgers, mince, sausages, and rolled or stuffed roasts right through until any juices run clear.
- Cook white fish until it flakes easily with a fork.
- Most foods should be cooked to at least 75°C.
- Take extra care when preparing foods where the eggs remain uncooked such as egg-nog and home-made mayonnaise, as bacteria on the egg shells can contaminate the food.



Meat thermometers are available from many retail stores that sell kitchen utensils and barbecue equipment.

Reheating and cooling food



Reheat foods thoroughly so they are steaming (above 75°C) or boiling.

- Reheat foods thoroughly so they are steaming (above 75°C) or boiling.
- Keep cooked food out of the Temperature Danger Zone.
- If you need to store food for later use, once the steam stops rising cover it and put it in the fridge.
- When you cook ahead of time, divide large portions of food into small shallow containers for refrigeration.
- If you don't want to cool the food straight away, keep hot food at a temperature of 60°C or hotter.

Did you know?

Good airflow inside your fridge is important for effective cooling. Try to avoid overfilling your fridge.

Food poisoning

Food poisoning is frequently caused by bacteria from food that has been poorly handled, stored or cooked. The food may look, taste and smell normal.

The symptoms of food poisoning may vary depending on the type of bacteria or contaminants causing the illness. You may experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- nausea
- stomach cramps
- diarrhoea
- fever
- headaches.

Symptoms can occur within 30 minutes after eating, or a number of hours later. They can be mild or severe.

Some bacteria can also cause other symptoms. Listeria bacteria may cause miscarriage or other serious illness in susceptible people.

Where to get help

- See your doctor.
- Report your illness to your local council particularly if you think the illness is related to food that you have purchased or eaten so that the cause can be investigated.

Some people are more at risk from food poisoning including young children, pregnant women, the elderly and people with other illnesses.

For more information on food safety contact:

- Food Safety Hotline on 1300 364 352 or email foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au
- Your local council

Visit

www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.safefood.net.au

www.foodstandards.gov.au

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