

Temperature Control

May 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

Keep Foods Away from the Danger Zone

After cooking or heating perishable food that is not for immediate consumption must be cooled quickly. **Rapid cooling** will prevent microbial growth by limiting the time food is in the temperature danger zone.

Rapid cooling is achieved by bringing the temperature of the cooked food from **135°F to 70°F within two (2) hours**, and from **70°F to 41°F within four (4) hours**.

Cooling Hot Food Methods

- Place hot food in shallow containers and in an ice bath, stirring constantly.
- Use rapid cooling equipment.
- Use containers that facilitate heat transfer.
- Add ice as an ingredient to hot foods.
- Cut hot foods into smaller portions.

Defrost Frozen Food Methods

- In refrigeration that maintains the temperature of the food at 41°F or below.
- For two (2) hours or less, completely submerge frozen foods under potable, cold, running water (temperature 70°F or below).
- In a microwave oven.
- As part of a cooking process.

Storing Foods at the Correct Temperature

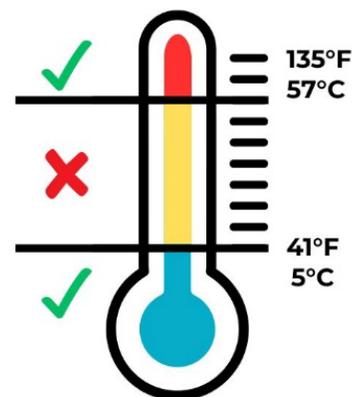
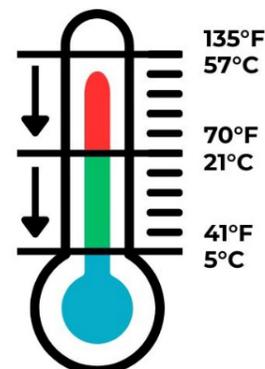
- Keep hot foods hot at **135°F or above 135°F**.
- Keep *cold* foods *cold* at **41°F or below 41°F**.

Danger Zone: Bacteria can grow in the danger zone. Keep potentially hazardous foods out of the danger zone.

- **Danger Zone is between 42°F and 134°F.**

Temperature Requirements for Storing Common Foods

PRODUCT	STORAGE TEMPERATURE
Pasteurized Milk and Pasteurized Milk Products	45°F or below
Shell Eggs	45°F or below
Molluscan Shellfish	45°F or below
Fresh Fish	41°F or below
Fresh Meat	41°F or below
Fresh Poultry	41°F or below



Cooking and Reheating Requirements

To ensure that your foods are cooked safely, always use a food thermometer to measure internal temperatures. Check the temperature in several places to ensure that the food is cooked all the way through. Cook food items to the recommended minimum internal temperature shown below.



Ground, Chopped, and Flaked Meats (Beef, Veal, Lamb, and Pork):

All raw ground, chopped, flaked, and formed meats must be heated to a *minimum internal temperature* of **at least 158°F, or held at 155°F for 15 seconds**. For safety, most ground meat products should be cooked until it is brown in the middle; temperatures should be taken in the thickest part of the food. If cooking appears uneven, the temperature of any uncooked area should also be taken.



Eggs and Foods Containing Raw Eggs:

All foods made with raw eggs must be heated to a *minimum internal temperature* of **at least 145°F**. Temperatures should be taken at the center of the egg-containing food. Cooked egg whites and yolks should be firm after cooking, not “runny.” After cooking, eggs must be held at or **above 135°F**. Pooled raw shell eggs must be kept refrigerated at **41°F or below until cooked** to prevent the growth of bacteria.



Pork and Pork Products:

All pork or foods made with pork must be heated (cooked) to a *minimum internal temperature* of **at least 145°F for 15 seconds**. Some pork may contain parasitic worms and harmful bacteria. Thorough cooking is an effective way to make pork and pork products safe for consumption.



Poultry, Chopped or Ground Poultry, and Foods Stuffed with Meat or Poultry:

All poultry (chicken, turkey, duck, goose, etc.) and foods stuffed with meat or poultry must be heated to *minimum internal temperature* of **at least 165°F**. Whole turkey breast should have a temperature of **at least 165°F**.



Microwave Raw Meats, Eggs, and Poultry:

When foods containing raw ground meat, eggs, pork, or poultry are cooked in a microwave oven, they must be heated to a *minimum internal temperature* of **at least 165°F**. These foods must be heated in a covered microwaveable container and stirred or rotated frequently to ensure even heating. After microwaving, let the food stand in its covered container for at least two minutes prior to serving.



Reheating Certain Foods:

When cooked foods are being reheated, a *minimum internal temperature* of **at least 165°F for 15 seconds** is necessary to kill bacteria that can grow as the food cools.

Time as a Public Health Control

Time is usually used in combination with temperature to control the growth of bacteria and ensure that food is safe to consume. However, under specific conditions, food may be removed from temperature controls for a short period of time, less than four (4) hours, and rely only on *Time as a Public Health Control (TPHC)*. Used correctly, time can be an effective control; on the other hand, if time is not closely monitored, food-related illnesses may result.

Which Foods May be Used with Time as a Public Health Control?

- Potentially hazardous foods (PHF) held before cooking.
- Ready-to-eat (RTE) foods that are displayed or held for service for immediate consumption.

What Conditions Must be met When Using TPHC?

- Inform your local Environmental Health District Office (enforcement agency) of the intention to use TPHC.
- Label food containers to indicate four hours past the time food was removed from temperature control— e.g. if food was removed from temperature control at 12:00 p.m., mark 4:00 p.m. on the food container to indicate when the food must be discarded.
- Cook and serve potentially hazardous foods within the four-hour timeframe or throw the food away if it is past four hours.
- Serve ready-to-eat foods within the four-hour time frame or throw the food away if it is past four hours.
- Throw away any food that has exceeded the four-hour time frame or food that is in unmarked food containers.
- For compliance keep written procedures for TPHC and rapid cooling method for food that is prepared, cooked, and refrigerated **before** time is used as a public health control; these procedures must be available for review upon request.

Note:

Once time has been used as a Public Health Control, food **cannot** be placed back under temperature control to be used at a later time. **Foods that have exceeded the four (4) hour time frame must be thrown away.**

Please contact your local Environmental Health District Office if you have any questions.

Visit <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/EH/about/district-offices.htm> to locate on office near you.