Keep food safe

Reheat rapidly to 60°C or hotter

Cool food rapidly to 5°C or colder

Remember
• Prepare food quickly
• Cook food thoroughly
• Cool and reheat food rapidly
• Store, display and transport food either chilled or hot

Essential food safety practices

Cool and reheat food safely—to the right temperatures

Food poisoning

Food poisoning, with its symptoms of vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach cramps, is a very unpleasant illness from which most of us will recover. However, for some people, including young children and the frail elderly, it can be life threatening or can leave sufferers with serious health problems.

One cause of food poisoning is bacteria that have had the opportunity to multiply in food.

Bacteria that have the chance to multiply in food cause food poisoning in two ways. They either multiply in foods to sufficient numbers to make us ill or, as they multiply, they produce poisons in the food that cause illness.

Keeping food at the right temperature will prevent food poisoning bacteria that might be in the food from multiplying.

Food Standards Australia New Zealand developed this leaflet for State and Territory governments. Food Standards Australia New Zealand website is at www.foodstandards.gov.au

For food safety fact sheets and information on your food safety obligations contact your local government council

Council contact details
The types of food that must be cooled and reheated safely are called potentially hazardous food.

Examples of potentially hazardous food that are likely to be cooled and reheated

- Cooked meat or cooked food containing meat, such as casseroles, curries and lasagne
- Cooked food containing smallgoods (e.g. strasbourg, ham and chicken loaf), such as pizza topping
- Dairy products, such as milk and custard
- Sauces containing cream or milk
- Seafood including patties, fish balls, stews and sauces containing seafood and fish stock
- Cooked rice and pasta
- Foods containing eggs, beans, nuts or other protein rich foods such as quiche, soy bean products and lentil burgers

This list may not include every type of food. If you are doubtful about a particular food the Environmental Health Officer at your local council will be able to assist.

You must have a thermometer to check the temperature of the food

If you handle potentially hazardous food you must have a probe thermometer accurate to +/-1°C to check the temperature of your food.

Remember to clean and sanitise the thermometer before you insert it into food. A fact sheet on thermometers is available from your local council.

What is the problem?

Food poisoning bacteria that may have survived the cooking process will start to multiply as hot food cools down.

Once the food has dropped in temperature to 60°C or below bacteria will multiply. Their numbers will increase as the food cools to 5°C. The longer the food takes to cool the greater the number of bacteria in the food.

How can I prevent food poisoning bacteria from multiplying?

Cool the food as quickly as possible. The Food Safety Standards require you to cool potentially hazardous food in the following times

From 60°C to 21°C in a maximum of 2 hours and from 21°C to 5°C in a maximum of 4 hours

What are some ways I can cool food rapidly?

- Place food to cool in the refrigerator or cool-room as soon as it stops steaming
- Portion food before cooling for example, slice meats and cut large poultry into smaller portions
- Place liquid foods such as stews and casseroles in shallow containers no more than 5 cm deep
- Ensure cool air can circulate round the food – so place food containers on shelves, not on the floor.