



# Food safety advice

## Storing food safely in the fridge

Surely there's nothing easier than putting food in the fridge safely?...well it's not quite as easy as it sounds.

### Harmful bacteria

Raw foods, such as meat, poultry, fish, and eggs may contain bacteria that can cause food poisoning. Raw vegetables such as potatoes, leeks, carrots and salad items like lettuce, which have been grown in the soil can also carry harmful bacteria.



Ready-to-eat foods like cooked meats, cheese, sandwiches, pies etc., are also stored in the fridge and we need to make sure that the harmful bacteria on the raw foods doesn't get passed on to the ready-to-eat foods – we call this 'cross contamination'.

To protect ready-to-eat foods from cross contamination, we often cover them, wrap them and store them in a different part of the fridge.

### So how should I store the food?

Here's ten simple ideas on how to store your food safely.



1. Store raw food like meat, poultry, fish, sausages, bacon etc., in the bottom part of the fridge so that juices cannot drip on foods below.
2. Store ready-to-eat foods such as cooked meats, pies and dairy products such as cheese, butter, cream and yoghurt in the top part of the fridge.

*Covering and wrapping food stops harmful bacteria from being passed from raw foods to ready-to-eat foods. It also stops food from drying out and becoming stale.*

3. Eggs should be kept in the fridge, in their box, or on the shelves in the door which are specifically made for eggs. They should be kept below ready to eat food as there is still a chance they could crack and drip onto other food.
4. Many foods now need to go in the fridge once they've been opened – check the labels to see which ones. Things like soup, jars of cooking sauce, pickles, jams and ketchup should nearly always be kept in the fridge once open.

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5. Never put open cans in the fridge – transfer the contents into a container or covered bowl, and remember to use within two days.
6. Never put hot food straight in the fridge. It doesn't cool very well and it warms the whole of the fridge up. Cover hot food, cool on a work surface - and put in the fridge once it is cool. (Don't leave cooling for more than 90 minutes)

7. Watch out for the use-by dates on ready-to-eat foods like cheese, cooked meats, pies and ready prepared meals. Never eat food once it has gone past the use-by date – it may not be safe.
8. Always bring chilled and frozen food home quickly from the shops and put it away in the fridge straight away. The food will 'go off' quicker if it is allowed to get too warm.
9. Avoid overloading. If a fridge is over-packed with food or iced up it's harder to keep the temperature correct. Defrost your fridge/freezer regularly.
10. Clean all internal and external surfaces often, especially fridge shelves and door storage compartments. Mop up any spills as soon as they happen.



## The right temperature?

It's also important for the fridge to work at the right temperature so that harmful bacteria will not grow and the food will keep well.



The **freezer** part needs to be kept at **-18°C**.  
The main **fridge** part needs to be kept below **5°C**.

It would be helpful to have a fridge thermometer inside the fridge so that you can see that it is keeping food cold enough.