

How to Properly Cool Food

Cooling foods too slowly is one of the leading causes of foodborne illness.

If cooked food needs to be cooled for storage or service, it must be done quickly because the food will pass through the danger zone (4°C to 60°C). The danger zone is the temperature in which bacteria can grow quickly. Therefore, the faster cooked foods are cooled, the less time it spends in the danger zone, and the less risk there is of bacterial growth.

Important Time Frames:

- Within **two hours** the temperature of cooked foods should drop from 60°C to 20°C.
- Within the next **four hours** the temperature of cooked foods should drop from 20°C to 4°C.

The whole process cannot take longer than 6 hours.

Methods to Cool Food Quickly:

When cooking foods made in large quantities, the safest way to cool foods within 6 hours is by:

1. Portioning/Using Shallow Pans

- Cut large portions food into smaller pieces. E.g. cut roasted chicken into slices.
- Transfer cooked food from large pots into shallow pans or small containers.
- Partly cover pans/containers to protect from contamination but allow heat to escape.
- Place the pans/containers in the refrigerator to bring the temperature down quickly.

2. Stirring/Ice Wand

- Stirring will help cool food quicker.
- Using an ice wand to stir foods will make the cooling process even quicker.
 - ◆ An ice wand is a pre-chilled stick or paddle.
- Stirring food and/or using an ice wand helps to cool food from the inside out.
- Afterwards, place the food in the refrigerator to bring the temperature down quickly.

3. Adding Ice Directly or Indirectly to the Food

- **Directly:** some soups, stews, or chilli's can be cooled by adding ice directly to the food item. Alternatives to ice could be adding frozen vegetables (i.e., peas) into the soup after everything is cooked.
- **Indirectly:** Place the food container into a sink of ice water, or ice water bath.
- Afterwards, place the food in the refrigerator to bring the temperature down quickly.

A probe thermometer should be used to monitor the internal temperature of the food as it cools. If cooling takes longer than 6 hours, the food must be discarded.

For more information, please contact your Public Health Inspector
at Southwestern Public Health.