# Food Cooling & Storage

**BC Centre for Disease Control**
Provincial Health Services Authority

Cooling and storing foods promptly, and correctly, can help prevent foodborne illness. Here are some tips.

## Refrigerate Foods Promptly

- Refrigerate or freeze meat, poultry, eggs, fish, shellfish, ready-to-eat foods, and leftovers **within 2 hours** of being left out.
- Divide large amounts of leftovers into shallow containers for quicker cooling.
- Use refrigerated leftovers within 3 to 4 days; labelling with dates may be helpful.

### 📝 Tip

During picnics or camping, refrigerate, or store foods in a cooler, within 1 hour if the temperature outdoors is above 32°C (90°F).

## Storage Tips for Protein Foods

- Use up raw poultry, fish, or ground meats within 2 days.
- Use up raw beef, veal, lamb, or pork within 3 to 5 days.
- Eat lunch meats within 3 to 5 days of opening.
- Use refrigerated leftovers within 3 to 4 days.

**Other foods may have a longer storage time in the refrigerator**

- Eggs can be stored for 3 to 5 weeks.
- Processed and brick cheese can be stored for 3 to 4 weeks.

## Store at Safe Temperatures

**Don't overfill your refrigerator (or cooler);** cool air needs to circulate to keep food at safe temperatures.

**Place a thermometer in your refrigerator and freezer to regularly check temperatures.**

*Don't forget to use a thermometer in your cooler too!*
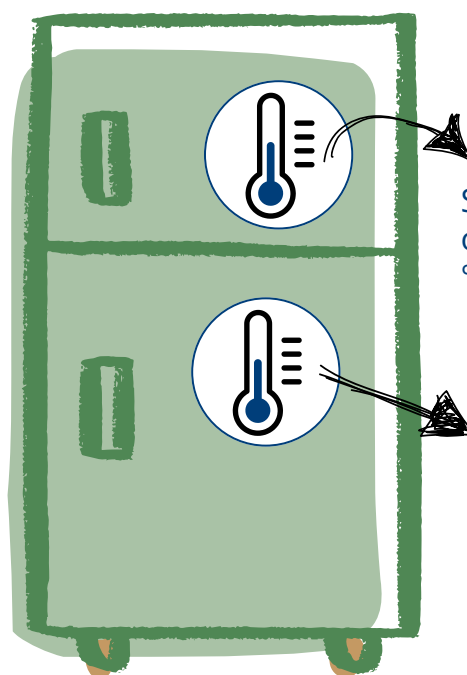
Set your freezer at, or below -18 °C (0 °F).

Set your refrigerator at, or below 4°C (40°F)

## 📝 Power Outage Tips

**During a power outage**
- If you experience a power outage, try not to open your fridge or freezer until the power comes back on.
- A full fridge can hold their temperature for about 4 hours.
- A full freezer can hold its temperature about 48 hours.

**Food contaminated with bacteria does not always smell bad or appear spoiled.**

**After a power outage**
- Throw away all food that has an unusual colour or odour.
- Throw away all food that has been above 4°C for more than 2 hours.
- Foods in the freezer can be re-frozen if they are:
    - At 4°C or less OR
    - Still containing ice crystals