

FACT SHEET

Temperature Control for Potentially Hazardous Food



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POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS FOODS

Potentially hazardous foods (PHF) (e.g. raw and cooked meat, dairy products, seafood, cooked rice and pasta) should be stored, displayed and transported under temperature control (less than 5°C or above 60°C) to ensure food safety is maintained.

Use of the 2-hour/4-hour rule is an alternative that may be used by businesses to deal with some of the practicalities of handling PHF to prevent the growth of bacteria when the PHF cannot be kept under these temperature ranges (e.g. PHF removed from refrigeration or not consumed immediately once cooked).

Alternatively, adopting the 4-hour/2-hour rule for cooling ready-to-eat (RTE) PHF that you intend to use later thereby ensuring the food is cooled to 5°C as quickly as possible.

Extra caution is advised with RTE PHF served to vulnerable people (young, elderly, ill or pregnant)

Food outside temperature control (2-hour/4-hour rule)

How to apply the 2-hour/4-hour rule – removing from refrigeration?

- Timing starts when the ready-to-eat (RTE) PHF is brought out of refrigeration (at below 5°C);
- If food is held for no more than 2 hours above 5°C, it can be returned to the refrigerator to use later;
- RTE PHF held beyond the 2 hours above 5°C needs to be used, sold or discarded before the total time of 4 hours is exceeded.
- RTE PHF held past the limit of 4 hours above 5°C is to be discarded.

How can a business track this time?

The use of log sheets can be an effective tool to monitor the times that food has been held within the temperature danger zone. Some businesses may identify displayed food with time stickers or colour-coded plates, etc. By a business using these control methods it also demonstrates the safety of their practice with PHF handling.

Can RTE PHF be bought in and out of temperature control more than once?

Yes, as long as the periods are less than 2 hours each and the total time out of temperature control are no longer than 4 hours. The use of a log sheet can be a useful tool for a business to keep track of each time period the RTE PHF is between 5°C and 60°C ensuring the 4 hours is not exceeded.

Cooling food (4-hour/2-hour rule)

The Food safety standards require food to be cooled as follows:

- from 60°C to 21°C in a maximum of 2 hours and
- from 21°C to 5°C within a further maximum period of 4 hours.

How can you contact us?



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