

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 211

FOOD SAFETY - DEFROSTING

Standard 3.2.2 requires potentially hazardous foods to be kept at specified temperatures including the defrosting of food. All food businesses must comply with these requirements or demonstrate a safe alternative system to ensure that food stays safe to eat.

Food poisoning bacteria can grow in frozen food while it is thawing, so avoid thawing frozen food in the temperature danger zone.

NEVER DEFROST MEAT OR POULTRY AT ROOM TEMPERATURE ON THE BENCHTOP OR IN THE SINK

The Food Standards Australia New Zealand recommends two methods for defrosting food.

1. Refrigerator – must be able to maintain food below 5°C

Plan ahead for slow, safe thawing in the refrigerator. Boneless chicken breasts will usually defrost overnight. Whole chickens may take one to two days or longer.

2. Microwave

This is the fastest option for defrosting. All foods defrosted by this method must be cooked immediately after defrosting as some areas may become warm and begin to cook during microwaving.

AVOID REFREEZING THAWED FOOD

If the food is frozen a second time, the bacteria do not die and the food is likely to have higher levels of food poisoning bacteria, so avoid refreezing thawed food.

For more information contact your local Environmental Health Office.

Contact details can be found at

http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Environmental_Health/Contact_us/index.aspx