

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 212

FOOD SAFETY – TEMPERATURE CONTROL 2 HOUR / 4 HOUR GUIDE

The 2 Hour / 4 Hour guide below tells you how long freshly prepared potentially hazardous foods, foods like cooked meat and foods containing meat, dairy products, prepared fruits and vegetables, cooked rice and pasta, and cooked or processed foods containing eggs, can be safely held at temperatures in the danger zone; that is between 5°C and 60°C. It takes time for food poisoning bacteria to grow to unsafe levels. Apply the following time limits to ensure these risky types of foods remain safe to eat:

TOTAL TIME BETWEEN 5°C AND 60°C

Under 2 hours	2 to 4 hours	Over 4 hours
What you should do		
Ok to use or refrigerate At 5°C or less	OK to use	Throw away

The total time includes all the time the food has been at room temperature, for example during delivery, preparation and transportation.

2 HOUR 4 HOUR GUIDE EXPLAINED

Example

A sandwich is freshly prepared at 12 noon and placed in a non-refrigerated display case:-

(1) The sandwich can be kept out of refrigeration for up to 2 hours (until 2p.m.) and then refrigerated and bought out again later in the day, say 4p.m. (not to go back into the refrigerator for later use after this point). If not used by 6p.m. (4 hours out of temperature control in total) then throw it away,

OR

(2) The sandwich can be kept out of temperature control (refrigeration) for up to 4 hours straight – until 4p.m. – then **MUST** be thrown away.

YOU MUST DOCUMENT HOW LONG FOOD IS KEPT OUT OF TEMPERATURE CONTROL

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

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