

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

No. 209

### *FOOD SAFETY - USE OF THERMOMETERS*

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#### DO I NEED A THERMOMETER?

If you are a food business that stores, transports, prepares, cooks or sells potentially hazardous food, then you must have a thermometer so you can measure the temperature of this food. Potentially hazardous food includes food that contains meat, fish, dairy products and eggs. It also includes cooked rice and pasta. **THE THERMOMETER MUST BE KEPT AT YOUR PREMISES AT ALL TIMES.**

#### WHAT SORT OF THERMOMETER DO I NEED?

- You need a thermometer that can be inserted into the food. This means it must be a probe. The thermometer must also be accurate to +/- 1°C.

#### WHERE DO I GET A THERMOMETER AND HOW MUCH DO THEY COST?

Companies that supply electronic testing equipment or catering equipment also sell thermometers. These companies are listed under 'Thermometers' or 'Catering suppliers' in the Yellow Pages. Most probe thermometers can be bought for about \$20 - \$50.

#### HOW DO I USE THE THERMOMETER TO MEASURE THE TEMPERATURE OF FOOD?

- Make sure that the thermometer is clean and dry.
- Place the probe in the food and wait until the temperature reading has stabilised before reading the temperature.
- Measure different parts of a food, as the temperature may not be the same.
- Clean and sanitise the thermometer after measuring the temperature of one food and before measuring the temperature of another food.
- If using the thermometer to measure hot and cold foods, wait for the thermometer to return to room temperatures.
- Measure different spots in the refrigerator as temperatures change within the fridge or cold display units.
- Measure the temperature of frozen foods by placing the probe thermometer between two packages.

**HOW DO I CLEAN AND SANITISE THE THERMOMETER?**

- Wash the probe with warm water and detergent.
- Sanitise the probe in an appropriate way for your thermometer (alcohol swabs are often used).
- Rinse the sanitiser away if necessary (refer to the instructions on the sanitiser).
- Allow the probe to air dry or thoroughly dry with a disposable paper towel.



**REMEMBER YOU CAN'T TELL THE TEMPERATURE OF FOOD SIMPLY BY LOOKING AT IT  
– YOU MUST USE A THERMOMETER!**

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