

# Storing and preparing food safely

Storing and handling food the right way keeps it safe to eat, fresh, and reduces waste. Follow our tips to protect your health and reduce food waste.

## Key things to know

- ✓ Keep foods at the right temperature – store pantry items cool and dry, fridge at or below 5 °C, and freezer at or below -15 °C. Use airtight containers to keep food fresh and stop harmful bacteria spreading.
- ✓ Handle high-risk foods carefully – foods like meat, chicken, seafood, cooked rice and pasta, eggs, and pre-made salads spoil quickly if not stored or handled safely.
- ✓ Practice good hygiene – wash your hands before preparing foods, clean surfaces and utensils, and keep raw foods and cooked foods separate.

## Pantry

Best for foods that don't need refrigeration

Uncooked grains, pasta, and cereals

Dried beans, nuts, seeds, herbs, and spices



Canned fruits, vegetables, beans, fish, and other proteins

Baking ingredients (like flour) and bread

Unopened sauces, spreads, condiments, and long-life milk

## Fridge

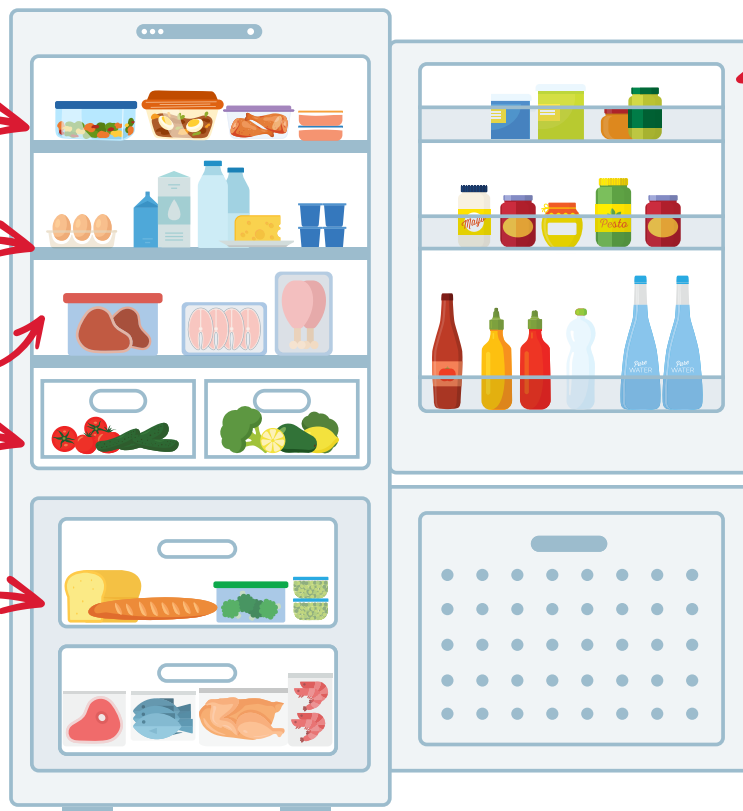
Fridge temperature is kept at or below 5 °C. Different parts of the fridge are best for different foods.

**Top shelf:** ready-to-eat foods and cooked meals

**Middle shelf:** eggs, tofu and dairy products like milk, cheese and yoghurt

**Bottom shelf:** raw meat, chicken and seafood. Keep in sealed containers and separate from ready-to-eat foods to stop the spread of harmful bacteria

**Crisper drawer:** Fruits (except bananas) and vegetables



## Fridge door

As the warmest part of the fridge the door is best for storing foods that won't spoil quickly like:

- Opened sauces, spreads and condiments
- Drinks (excluding milk)

## Freezer








Keep temperature at or below -15 °C

Best for storing foods that need to be kept frozen, leftovers, or foods that you'd like to last longer:

- Chopped fruits, vegetables and herbs
- Meat, chicken, and seafood
- Bread
- Pre-cooked foods or meals

Store in airtight containers and label with the date frozen.

# Tips to keep your food safe

 <b>Before preparing food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds.</li><li>• Clean kitchen surfaces, cutting boards, and utensils before use</li></ul>
 <b>Handling raw and cooked foods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep raw meat, seafood, and poultry (and their juices) separate from cooked/ready-to-eat foods</li><li>• Use different cutting boards and utensils for raw and cooked foods or clean them thoroughly between use</li><li>• Wash fruits and vegetables under running water before cooking or eating</li></ul>
 <b>Cooking and reheating</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cook food (e.g., minced meats, burgers, poultry) and reheat leftovers to at least 75°C to destroy harmful bacteria</li></ul>
 <b>Cooling and storing leftovers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cool cooked food quickly by stirring or dividing into smaller containers</li><li>• Avoid putting hot food straight in the fridge - this can increase the fridge temperature putting other foods at risk</li><li>• Store leftovers in airtight, labelled containers with dates for easy tracking</li><li>• Don't leave cooked or perishable foods out of the fridge for more than 2 hours</li></ul>
 <b>Freezing and defrosting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Freeze food at or below -15°C in airtight, dated containers</li><li>• Defrost in the fridge or microwave—ensure food is fully defrosted before cooking</li><li>• Do not refreeze thawed food</li></ul>
 <b>How long can you store food?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eat food before its use-by date and eat refrigerated leftovers within 3 days</li><li>• Be careful of high-risk foods like cooked rice or pasta, meats, chicken, seafood, dairy, eggs and salads</li><li>• Freezer storage times vary; check dates regularly and look for freezer burn or signs of spoilage</li></ul>
 <b>Who's at higher risk?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pregnant women and their babies</li><li>• Older adults</li><li>• People with weakened immune systems</li></ul>

## We're here to help!

For more healthy eating tips and tools, visit our website!

[heartfoundation.org.au](http://heartfoundation.org.au)

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