Don’t Hesitate... Refrigerate!

Use these “Five for Your Fridge” tips to avoid food-borne illness

1. More than 2 is bad for you
Two hours is the maximum time perishable foods should be at room temperature. Just ONE bacterium can grow to 2,097,152 bacteria in 7 hours if not kept under control!

   If you can’t eat perishable foods within 2 hours—don’t hesitate—refrigerate . . . at 40°F or colder. Perishable foods include meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, pasta, rice and cooked vegetables. Also, refrigerate fresh, peeled and/or cut fruits and vegetables within a couple of hours.

2. Here’s the rule, get it cool
Refrigerate hot take-out foods within 2 hours—let the refrigerator cool them. Leave container covers cracked open so food cools faster; cover tightly when cooled. (Note: For large quantities, divide food into loosely covered shallow containers before refrigeration.)

   If pizza and other perishable foods are left at room temperature for more than a couple of hours, TOSS! Some bacteria can form a heat-resistant toxin that cooking can’t destroy.

3. Avoid delay, eat in a day
Eat take-out foods and leftovers in a day for greater safety and quality.

4. Don’t miss a beat, safely reheat
Beware of microwaving take-out food in the original container. At high temperatures, chemicals from containers can be absorbed into foods. Safe microwave containers include glass, glass ceramic cookware, and those labeled for microwave use. To reheat in the microwave:

   • **Cover** container with a lid or plastic wrap turned back at one corner. Trapped steam helps destroy bacteria. Plastic wrap shouldn’t touch food to avoid possible chemical absorption.
   • **Stir and/or rotate** food midway or as needed.
   • **Reheat** foods until steaming hot throughout (165°F).

5. When in doubt, toss it out!
You can’t always see, smell or taste bacteria that might make you sick. **It takes from 1/2 hour to 2 or more weeks to get sick from contaminated food.**

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