

# Cooling Potentially Hazardous Foods

Improper cooling of potentially hazardous foods is an important cause of foodborne illness. Disease causing bacteria grows best in the “temperature danger zone” of 41° F to 140° F. Therefore, when potentially hazardous foods are improperly cooled, they can provide an ideal environment for bacteria to multiply rapidly and cause disease.

Potentially hazardous foods must be cooled from 140° F to 70° F within two hours. An additional four hours is allowed to completely cool the food product to 41° F. The faster foods pass through the “temperature danger zone” as they are cooled, the better.

## Cooling Tips

- Never allow food to set on the countertop (room temperature) to cool.
- Refrigerate or chill the food in an ice bath immediately upon removal from the heat source.
- Use the right type of storage container to chill foods:
  - + Divide foods into smaller portions and put into shallow containers.
  - + Foods cool faster in metal containers than either glass or plastic ones.
  - Cool in loosely covered or uncovered containers. Rapidly chill the food, and then cover tightly.
- Allow for air circulation because loosely covered or uncovered foods chill faster. Rapidly chill the food, then cover tightly.
- Where possible, substitute ice for water in a recipe. Add the ice at the end of the cooking process to cool the product rapidly.

- Set containers of food in ice baths and stir frequently.
- Use a blast chiller when possible.

## For Further Information Contact the Following MDH District Offices:

|              |   |                |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| Bemidji      | ◆ | (218) 308-2100 |
| Duluth       | ◆ | (218) 723-4642 |
| Fergus Falls | ◆ | (218) 332-5150 |
| Mankato      | ◆ | (507) 344-2700 |
| Marshall     | ◆ | (507) 537-7151 |
| Metro        | ◆ | (651) 201-4500 |
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To request this document in another format, call 651-201-4500 or TTY 651-201-5797.

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