

# BACDOWN!

GIVE BACTERIA THE COLD SHOULDER. KEEP THE TEMPERATURE IN YOUR FRIDGE AT 40°F OR BELOW.

## THE CHILL CHALLENGE

According to both the United States Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety and Inspection Service, refrigeration at 40°F or below is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness. Microorganisms grow more rapidly at warmer temperatures, and research shows that keeping a constant refrigerator temperature of 40°F or below helps slow growth of these harmful microbes.

## THE CHILL SOLUTION

The best way to make sure your refrigerator is maintaining the recommended temperature of 40°F or below is to check it with a refrigerator thermometer. This type of thermometer is usually a separate tool that stays in the refrigerator and displays the actual temperature. It is not a numbered dial that helps you adjust temperature. Refrigerator thermometers are available at grocery, discount and hardware stores and are recommended for all home refrigerators.

When using a refrigerator thermometer, follow these important tips:

- Always follow thermometer manufacturer instructions for placement of the thermometer inside the refrigerator.
- Make sure your refrigerator thermometer reads 40°F or below. Keep in mind there are normal events that might cause your refrigerator thermometer to temporarily read higher than 40°F. These include:
  - initial placement of the thermometer inside the refrigerator
  - a refrigerator door opened for an extended period of time
  - hot foods recently placed in the refrigerator
  - the refrigerator's automatic defrost cycle
- Your refrigerator cycles on and off. According to NSF International ([www.nsf.org](http://www.nsf.org)), you should check the thermometer at the time your refrigerator compressor just turns on. This is when your refrigerator is at its highest temperature. If the thermometer reads above 40°F, adjust the control dial consistent with the refrigerator manufacturer's instructions.



### COOL RULES

**USE THIS TOOL TO KEEP IT COOL.** Use a refrigerator thermometer to be sure the temperature is consistently 40°F or below.

**THE CHILL FACTOR.** Refrigerate or freeze perishables, prepared foods and leftovers within two hours of purchase or use. Always marinate foods in the refrigerator.

**THE THAW LAW.** Never defrost food at room temperature. Thaw food in the refrigerator. For a quick thaw, submerge food in cold water in an airtight package or thaw in the microwave if you will be cooking it immediately.

**DIVIDE AND CONQUER.** Separate large amounts of leftovers into small, shallow containers for quicker cooling in the refrigerator.

**AVOID THE PACK ATTACK.** Do not over-stuff the refrigerator. Cold air must circulate to keep food safe.

**ROTATE BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.** Use or discard chilled foods on a regular basis. Check the USDA Cold Storage chart available at <http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/f01 chart.html>

**DON'T GO TOO LOW.** As you approach 32°F ice crystals can begin to form and lower the quality of some foods such as raw fruits, vegetables and eggs. A refrigerator thermometer will help you determine whether you are too close to this zone.

Visit [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) today for more tips.

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Both the food industry and the government work hard to protect consumers from disease-causing foodborne microorganisms. In addition, when it comes to protecting ourselves and our families, consumers are urged to always **CLEAN, SEPARATE, COOK and CHILL** to help reduce the risk of foodborne illness.



## These messages were developed by the Partnership for Food Safety Education.

The Partnership for Food Safety Education unites industry associations, consumer and public health groups, the United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration to educate the public about safe food handling and preparation. The Partnership, a non-profit organization, is the creator and steward of the Fight BAC!® campaign, a food safety education program developed using scientifically-based recommendations resulting from an extensive consumer research process. Fight BAC!® materials are fully accessible online at [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) and are utilized by consumers, teachers, dietitians, public health officials and extension agents across the United States. Fight BAC!® and BAC! images, © 2005, Partnership for Food Safety Education.

**This material made available with support  
from the Food Marketing Institute Foundation.**

For additional food safety information, visit [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) or [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov).