

# Handling food safely



## Learner guide

Ready for work

**Pre-employment skills**

# **Handling food safely**

Version 1.2



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## Version control and modification history

Version	Release date	Modification
Version 1.1	May 2016	First release
Version 1.2	November 2017	Minor corrections as part of our continuous improvement program

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### Working safely with food

© 2016 Aspire Training & Consulting  
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First published May 2016  
Reprinted (with amendments) November 2017

Cover design: Aspire Training & Consulting

e-ISBN 978 1 76031 854 3 (PDF version)  
ISBN 978 1 76031 853 6

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# Food poisoning

Have you ever eaten food that made you sick? If so, perhaps it gave you food poisoning for a few days. You may even have been more seriously ill with vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and a headache. This happens to thousands of people in Australia every year. Some people even end up in hospital because of food poisoning.

Do you ever buy or cook food for yourself, your family or other people? Do you prepare or serve food at work? If you do, then you need to know how to keep food safe so no one will get sick.



# How does food become dangerous?

Spoilt food, or food that has gone bad, may become poisonous. This is very dangerous because if you eat this food, you may become very sick.

Food can get spoilt in three ways.

## Ways food can get spoilt

## What it means

### Chemicals get into the food

This happens when you keep cleaning chemicals or things like fly spray near food. You must store food carefully so it does not come into contact with chemicals and become poisonous.



### Objects get into the food

Insects, hair from people or animals, and dirt may get into the food. You must keep food covered at all times so it does not become spoilt.



### Germs get into the food

Germs are bacteria and viruses. These make you sick by poisoning the food before you eat it. These germs occur when food is not cooked properly, or people use dirty hands or dirty utensils when making the food. You must always be very clean when handling food so it doesn't become poisonous.



## Story

Leah goes out shopping all day. She visits many shops and buys various things. She goes up and down escalators and lifts. She travels on a train and on a bus. When Leah gets home she unpacks her shopping. It is her turn to cook for her roommates. It is getting late, so she quickly starts preparing the food. She forgets to wash her hands first.



## Activity 1

Read the story about Leah again, then complete this activity.

Make a list of all the things Leah may have touched during her shopping trip. Why is this important? What should Leah have done before cooking?

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[Click to complete Activity 1](#)

# Shopping for food

You can start thinking about food safety when you are shopping.

Shops must put dates on the packaged food they sell.

The dates are:

- use-by dates
- best before dates.

It is best not to buy any food past these dates.

## What it looks like



## What it means

Use-by dates tell you the food must be eaten before that date.



Best before dates tell you the food is best before that date, but you can still eat it after that date.

## Activity 2

Next time you are in a supermarket, look at some of the use-by dates on the packaging.

Choose three different food items. Use the following table to write down:

- what the food is
- if the date is a use-by date or best before date
- how long (days, weeks or months) until the food reaches the date.

An example has been provided for you.

What the food is	Use-by date or best before date	How long until the date is reached?
<i>Chocolates</i>	<i>Best before 31 July 2018</i>	<i>4 months</i>

[Click to complete Activity 2](#)

# Choosing fresh meat

You need to be very careful when buying fresh meat. If meat is not fresh, or is off, it can make you very ill.

Some fresh meat is wrapped. Some is unwrapped.

## What it looks like



## What it is

If you are buying wrapped meat, look at the use-by date. Then make sure the wrapping has no tears or holes in it. Don't buy it if the wrapping is damaged – germs may have got in!



Meat that is not wrapped should be fresh and smell good. Beef should be red in colour. Lamb should be light red. Pork should be pink and have white fat.

Never buy any meat that is brown, greenish or sticky. Also make sure the shop assistant or butcher wears gloves when they handle unwrapped meat.

# Choosing fresh fish and seafood

Fish and other seafood is usually kept on ice in shops. This keeps the fish fresh, as it can go off very quickly.

## What it looks like

## What it means



The shop assistant must wear gloves to handle the fish.



The fish's eyes should be bright.



Fresh fish should not actually smell 'fishy'. If it does, it may be going off.

## Choosing frozen food



Frozen food should be completely solid. Don't buy something if parts of the packet feel soft. This means it may be thawing and could be going bad. Don't buy something if the package is torn or broken. Pick up your frozen food last when you are shopping. You need to get it home as fast as possible so it doesn't start to thaw.

# Choosing other foods

Other foods you may buy include canned food and dairy food. Here is more information about choosing these foods.

## What it looks like



## What it means

### Canned food

Food that comes in cans usually keeps for a long time because it is sealed. However, don't buy cans that are dented or have a bulge in them. The food inside may have spoilt.



### Dairy food

Always check the use-by dates on dairy foods like milk, cream, cheese and yoghurt. If you don't use milk often, choose a small bottle with the longest expiry date. This is usually stacked at the back of the shelf. This way it won't go bad before you use it all.

When packing your food items, separate raw meat, poultry (chicken) and fish from the other food in your shopping bag. This will make sure all the food stays safe. You should then get your food home as soon as possible.

## Story



Shanti asks two friends to come for dinner on Saturday 10 June. On Monday 5 June Shanti goes shopping to buy some food for the dinner.

She buys cheese. The use-by date is 21 June. Shanti picks up a packet of frozen fish. The packet has a hole in it so she chooses another one.

On her walk home from the shops, Shanti stops at a café for a cup of coffee. By the time she gets home the frozen fish has thawed.

## Activity 3

Read the previous story about Shanti again, then answer these questions.

1. Would the cheese still be okay to eat on Saturday 10 June?

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2. Why didn't Shanti take the broken packet?

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3. What should Shanti have done after she finished shopping?

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[Click to complete Activity 3](#)

# Storing food safely

It is important to store food safely so it lasts as long as possible and doesn't become poisonous.

## Frozen food

Frozen food needs to be put into the freezer as soon as possible.

Don't ever re-freeze food that has thawed. You should cook it to remove any germs. Then you can freeze it again.

If you don't cook the food that has thawed, you should throw it out as it may not be safe.



## Food in the fridge

Chilled food should be put into the fridge as soon as possible. All dairy food must be kept in the fridge.

Put raw meat, poultry and fish on the bottom shelf of the fridge. That way it doesn't drip on any other food. Try to use fresh meat within two days of buying it.

Everything in the fridge should be covered. This way it is protected and will not go dry.

Look at the labels on cans and jars of things like sauce, jam and salad dressing. Some may say 'Refrigerate after opening'. Keep them in the cupboard until you open them, then store them in the fridge.



If you open a can of something, like baked beans, and don't eat it all, don't put the can in the fridge. Put the leftover food into a plastic container with a lid and put that in the fridge.

Most fridges have a special section for keeping fresh fruit and vegetables. However, keep potatoes and onions in a dry, dark place, not in the fridge.

Don't pack your fridge too full of food. The cold air needs to be able to move around in the fridge to keep the food fresh and safe.

## Activity 4

1. Look in your freezer and fridge at home. Are things stored in the ways that have been explained? Have some things been in the fridge too long?

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2. Now look in your pantry or food cupboards. Are there any things like sauces or jams with labels that say 'Refrigerate after opening'? Did you find any that should be in the fridge?

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[Click to complete Activity 4](#)

## Story

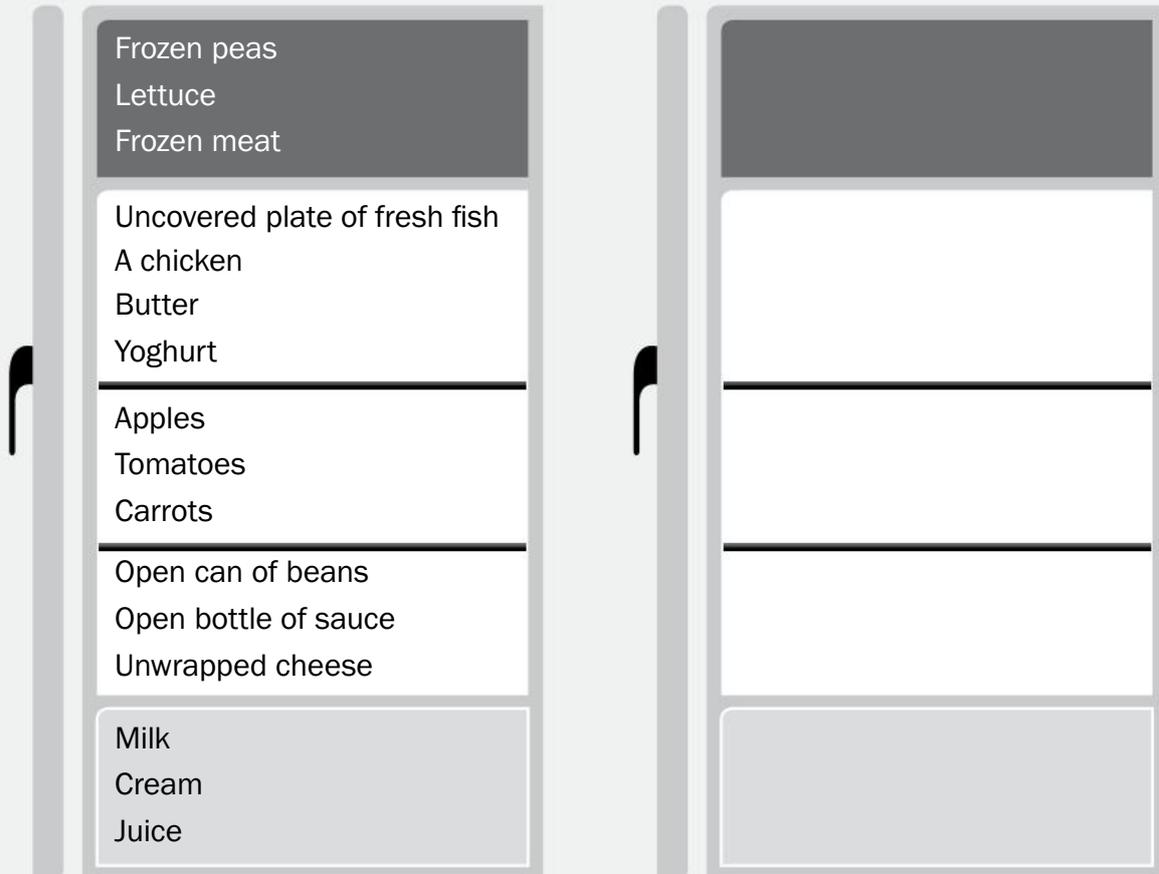
Layla works in an office. No-one takes much care of the fridge in the kitchen. One day she looks in the fridge. It is so full that some things fall out when she opens the door. Layla decides to clean out the fridge. She takes everything out one by one. Layla throws out any food that is past its use-by date. She throws out some cooked food that has been in the fridge for a few weeks. Layla also throws out a half-full can of baked beans and a rotten peach. Her workmates are very pleased when they find the fridge so clean and tidy. Layla may also have saved them from getting food poisoning!



## Activity 5

This is the way Frank has put his food in the freezer and fridge. Some things are in the correct place. Some are not.

The freezer is the top dark-grey section. The vegetable drawer is the bottom light-grey section. The white sections are shelves in the fridge.



In the empty fridge, write where Frank's food should be stored correctly. Move anything Frank has stored in the wrong place, and throw out anything he has stored in the wrong way. Remember some things might already be in the right place.

[Click to complete Activity 5](#)

# Preparing food safely

You must be very careful when you are preparing food. This is often the time when food becomes poisonous.

## What it looks like



## What it means

### Washing

Anyone handling food must first wash their hands carefully. Wash them with soap and warm water for 20 seconds.

Wash your hands:

- before you handle any food
- after you handle any food
- after using the toilet
- after changing a baby's nappy
- after blowing your nose or coughing
- after touching an animal.

Before you eat any fresh fruit, wash it carefully in cold water. Wash your hands too.

Wash everything you are going to cook with in warm, soapy water. This includes dishes, knives, the benchtop and chopping boards.



### Chopping up food

After you use a chopping board for raw meat, poultry or fish, wash it carefully. This is to stop germs passing from one food to another. It is best to use more than one chopping board.

Plastic chopping boards are better than wooden ones. This is because they are easier to wash thoroughly. They can also be put in a dishwasher. You can also use a different colour board for different food; for example, green for fruit and vegetables, red for meat and blue for fish.

### What it looks like



### What it means

#### Thawing food

If you want to cook with food that is frozen, you first need to thaw it. Never thaw food by leaving it out at room temperature. This could lead to food poisoning!

There are three safe ways to thaw frozen food.

1. Take it out of the freezer and put it on the bottom shelf of the fridge overnight.
2. Defrost it in the microwave. Do this just before you are going to cook it.
3. Put the wrapped food under cold running water. However, this is not the best method as it wastes water!

### Activity 6

1. After blowing your nose, what should you do before preparing some food?

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2. Is it safe to cut up raw chicken on a board and then cut up vegetables on the same board?

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3. What is one safe way to defrost frozen food?

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[Click to complete Activity 6](#)

## Cooking food safely

You need to cook food thoroughly to make it safe to eat. Cooking food at a high temperature kills dangerous bacteria. For example, meat should be cooked thoroughly. However, some food does not need to cook at a high temperature or for long periods of time. For example, don't cook vegetables too long, as this takes away some of their nutrients.

You can use a special food thermometer to measure the temperature and make sure your food is cooked. There are also other ways to make sure food is cooked properly.

### What it looks like



### What it means

- Cook meat until the juice that runs out is clear and not pink. You can also cut into the meat to make sure it is not still raw inside. This is very important for chicken.
- Cook fish until you can break flakes off easily with a fork.

- If you are cooking in a microwave, make sure there are no cold spots anywhere in the food. If there are, it is not safe to eat and you should stir it and cook it longer.

- Make sure sauces, stews, soups and other liquid foods reach boiling point at some stage in the cooking.

- Cooked food should never stand in a room for more than two hours in winter and one hour in the summer. You must eat it, reheat it, or cover it and put it in the fridge.

## Leftover food

You may want to save food that is left after a meal. Put it in a container until the food cools slightly. Then put it in the fridge. Don't put large hot containers into the fridge as they may heat up other food in the fridge. When you want to eat the leftovers, make sure you reheat them thoroughly. Only reheat them once.

### Activity 7

1. How do you know if a big piece of meat you are cooking is completely cooked?

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2. When can microwaved food be dangerous?

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3. How long can you leave a rice salad on the bench before eating it in summer?

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4. How many times can you reheat cooked food?

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[Click to complete Activity 7](#)

## What you have learnt

Put a ✓ in the box when you have understood these things.

- Food can make you sick if it has been contaminated.
- Food poisoning can last for a few days or it may be bad enough for you to go to hospital.
- Think about food safety when you are buying food.
- Never re-freeze frozen food that has thawed.
- Always wash your hands before and after handling food.
- Always use separate chopping boards for different types of food, or wash the board between the different types of food.
- Thaw food in the fridge, not at room temperature.
- Cook food thoroughly.
- Don't leave cooked food at room temperature:
  - for more than one hour in summer
  - for more than two hours in winter.

## Check your learning

1. Read the story, then complete the activity that follows.

### Story

Rebecca has just moved house. She brings things from her old house and puts them on the kitchen bench. The things she has are listed in the table below. Next to each one, write what Rebecca should do with it, or where she should put it.

Item	What Rebecca should do with it or where she should put it
A frozen chicken	
A meat stew that has already been reheated once	
A can of flyspray	
Half a bottle of milk that is past its use-by date	
A tub of yoghurt	
An open bottle of tomato sauce	
A new bottle of soy sauce	
A packet of frozen prawns that has thawed	

Item	What Rebecca should do with it or where she should put it
A carefully wrapped pork chop	
An open packet of frozen fish	
An open can of tomatoes	
Dishwashing liquid	

2. Read the story, then complete the activity that follows.

### Story

Seth wants to cook a big stew. He needs to buy green vegetables, pork, tomatoes, onions and sour cream. When he gets it home he has to chop everything up before putting it in the pot.

Write some tips to tell Seth:

- how to shop for the food safely
- how to prepare the food safely.

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[Click to complete](#)

# Answers

## Answers to activities

### Activity 1

Leah may have touched handrails and handles, lift buttons and money. These things could be dirty or have germs on them. She should have washed her hands before she started cooking.

### Activity 2

Answers will vary depending on the type of food and when the task is completed. Here is an example.

What the food is	Use-by date or best before date	How long until the date is reached?
Chocolates	Best before 31 July 2018	Four months
Tinned tuna	Best before 21 November 2020	2.5 years
Savoury crackers	Best before 26 April 2018	4 months
Strawberry yoghurt	Use by 10 April 2018	1 week

### Activity 3

#### Answer to Question 1

Yes, it does not expire until 21 June.

#### Answer to Question 2

The fish in it may have become contaminated and not be safe to eat.

#### Answer to Question 3

Shanti should have gone straight home to put the frozen fish away as soon as possible.

## Activity 4

### Answer to Question 1

Answers will vary, but could include the following points:

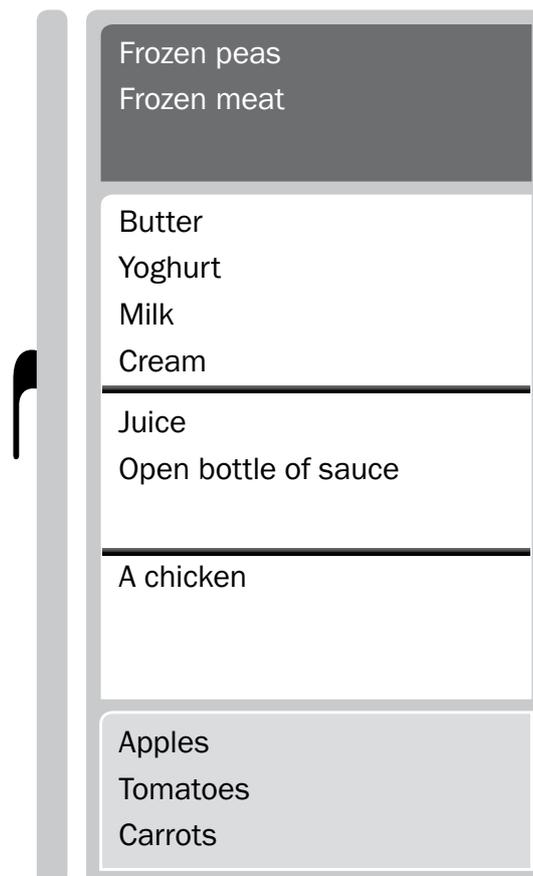
- Is everything wrapped or covered?
- Is raw meat stored below cooked meat?
- Is any food past its use-by date?

### Answer to Question 2

Answers will vary, but should show that learners checked for food items that have been opened and need to be stored in the refrigerator.

## Activity 5

Here is an example response. Note that responses may vary slightly in the shelving section.



## Activity 6

### Answer to Question 1

Wash your hands in warm soapy water for 20 seconds.

### Answer to Question 2

Only if you first wash the board in warm soapy water and let it dry.

### Answer to Question 3

Answers will vary but should include one of the following:

- Take it out of the freezer and put it on the bottom shelf of the fridge overnight.
- Defrost it in the microwave just before cooking.
- Put the wrapped food under cold running water.

## Activity 7

### Answer to Question 1

The juices will be clear. You could use a thermometer or you could cut the meat to look inside.

### Answer to Question 2

When there are cold spots, which means that the food hasn't been reheated well enough.

### Answer to Question 3

No more than one hour.

### Answer to Question 4

Only once.

## Answers to check your learning

### Answer to Question 1

Item	What Rebecca should do with it or where she should put it
A frozen chicken	In the freezer as soon as possible
A meat stew that has already been reheated once	Throw it out, it is not safe to reheat it again
A can of flyspray	In a cupboard away from any food items
Half a bottle of milk that is past its use-by date	Throw it out
A tub of yoghurt	In the fridge
An open bottle of tomato sauce	In the fridge
A new bottle of soy sauce	In the pantry or food cupboard
A packet of frozen prawns that has thawed	If they can't be cooked right away, throw them out as they will not be safe to eat later
A carefully wrapped pork chop	In the fridge
An open packet of frozen fish	Seal the packet and put it in the freezer as soon as possible
An open can of tomatoes	Transfer the tomatoes to a container with a lid and place it in the fridge
Dishwashing liquid	In a cupboard away from any food items

**Answer to Question 2**

Answers should cover the following points:

- How to shop for the food safely:
  - Make sure the pork looks fresh and is not brown.
  - Make sure the pork is packed in a bag separate from the rest of the food.
  - Make sure the sour cream is within its use-by date.
  - Get home as soon as possible to put the meat and sour cream in the fridge.
- How to prepare the food safely:
  - Wash your hands and all utensils before preparing the food.
  - Use separate boards to cut the meat and vegetables.
  - Make sure the stew reaches boiling point.
  - Make sure the meat is cooked properly by testing it or using a thermometer.