COOL IT RIGHT: WHY PROPER COOLING MATTERS FOR FOOD SAFETY

Properly cooling food is not just a good idea–it's essential to preventing foodborne illness.

Harmful bacteria thrive in the temperature danger zone (41°F–135°F). If food cools too slowly, bacteria can multiply rapidly and make people sick.

HOW PROPER COOLING PROTECTS US

Slows bacterial growth. Cold temperatures make bacteria sluggish–or stop them altogether. The colder, the better (below 41°F is the goal!).

Gets food to safe storage temperatures. Refrigerated foods must be at or below 41°F to keep them safe. The faster food reaches that temperature, the safer it is.

Keeps food out of the danger zone. The longer food lingers between 41° and 135°, the higher the risk. Rapid cooling=reduced risk.

Involves proven techniques. This includes dividing large amounts of food into smaller portions, using an ice-water bath, and utilizing rapid cooling equipment.

Follows the two-stage cooling method. This involves cooling food from 135°F to 70°F within two hours and then from 70°F to 41°F or below within the next four hours.

Maintains safe holding. Refrigerators should keep food consistently at or below 41°F to prevent recontamination.

REMINDER FOR FOOD OPERATORS

Any changes to your menu, equipment, or processes must be reviewed and approved by CUPHD before implementation. This is part of the plan review process–a critical step for operating safely and legally.

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
Champaign-Urbana Public Health District
c-uphd.org

Need help or have questions? Contact CUPHD's Environmental Health Division

217-373-7900
eh@c-uphd.org

May 2025