

ServSafe® Food Handler Guide for Food Banking



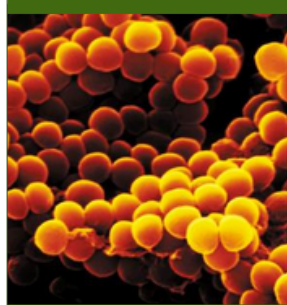
People who receive food from a food bank or agency partner trust you to help keep them safe. One big concern is foodborne illness. A **foodborne illness** is a disease that is transmitted to people through food.

Many hazards can make food unsafe and cause a foodborne illness.

Foodborne illness is almost always preventable.

How Food Becomes Unsafe: Hazards from the Environment

Biological



Tiny forms of life that you can't see, taste, or smell.

- They include:
 - Bacteria
 - (e.g., Salmonella, E. coli, Listeria)
 - Viruses
 - (e.g., Norovirus, Hep A)
 - Parasites
 - (e.g., Giardia, Trichinella)
 - Fungi
 - (e.g., molds, yeasts)

These forms of life are **everywhere** and sometimes they are harmless. But some cause illness and they are called **pathogens**.

Physical



Physical hazards occur when objects fall into food.

- Examples:
 - Glass
 - Metal shavings
 - Plastic pieces
 - Wood splinters
 - Bandages or fingernails
 - Jewelry
- Some physical hazards occur naturally in food, such as:
 - fruit pits
 - fish bones

Chemical



Chemicals found in your agency or vehicles can contaminate food.

- Cleaning chemicals
 - (sanitizers, detergents, degreasers)
- Pesticides
- Toxic metals
 - (e.g., copper, zinc, lead from improper cookware)
- Food additives used incorrectly
- Chemical contamination from maintenance supplies
 - (e.g., lubricants, paint)

How Food Becomes Unsafe: Caused by People

Poor personal hygiene:



- Transferring pathogens from your body to food
- Example: Sneezing, Coughing on food
- **#1 Cause of Foodborne-illness outbreaks.**

Time-temperature abuse:



- Letting food stay too long at temperatures that are good for pathogen growth
- Example: Leaving raw chicken breasts on a pallet in a loading area that is not refrigerated

Cross-contamination:



- Transferring pathogens from one surface or food to another
- Example: Keeping produce that raw meat juices have leaked on

Poor cleaning and sanitizing:



- Transferring pathogens from incorrectly cleaned surfaces to food
- Example: Scraping food from a container that appears clean but still has residue

Your Role in Keeping Food Safe

- **Practice Good Personal Hygiene**
 - **DON'T** transfer pathogens from your body to food.
- **Control the Time and Temperature of Food**
 - **DON'T** let food stay too long at temperatures that are good for pathogen growth.
- **Prevent Cross-Contamination**
 - **DON'T** transfer pathogens from one food to another.
 - **DON'T** transfer pathogens from one surface to another.
- **Clean and Sanitize Surfaces Correctly**
 - Keep everything clean.
 - Clean and sanitize **anything** that touches food.

Terms to Know

Allergens: Proteins that cause allergic reactions.

Cross-Contact: When a food item containing an allergen comes into contact with another food item and their proteins mix.

Many foods can cause allergic reactions, but the ones that commonly cause the most reactions are called
“The Big Eight”.

The “Big Eight” Allergens



- **Milk**

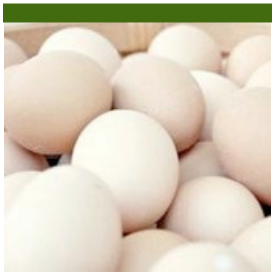


- **Fish**

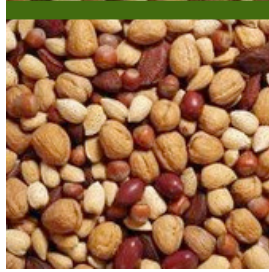
- Bass
- Flounder
- Cod



- **Wheat**

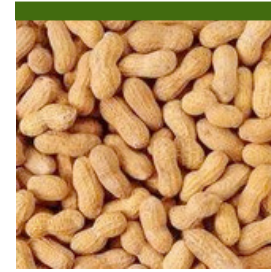


- **Eggs**



- **Tree Nuts**

- Almonds
- Walnuts
- Pecans



- **Peanuts**



- **Soy**



- **Crustacean Shellfish**

- Crab
- Lobster
- Shrimp

Preventing Food Allergen Contamination

Prevent Cross-Contact:

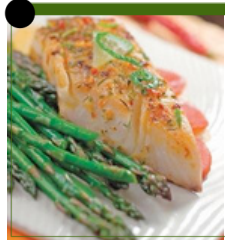
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that have come in contact with an allergen.
- Inspect food packaging for leaks or spills that can cause cross-contact.
- Wash hands and change gloves after handling allergens and before handling allergen-free food.
- Store food with allergens separately from allergen-free products.
- DO NOT store food containing allergens above allergen-free food.
- Use dedicated pallets and bins for products containing allergens.
- Properly label ALL food storage areas where allergens are held.

Apply Your Knowledge

Which Food Items are Common Food Allergen or Contains One?



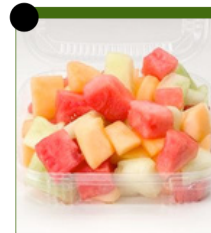
Tea



Cod



Wheat flour



Melons



Peanut butter



Eggs



Crab legs



Potatoes



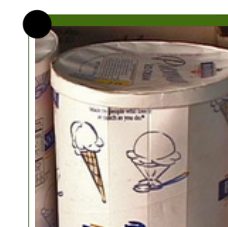
Mushrooms



Tomatoes



Almond Danish



Ice cream



Citrus fruit



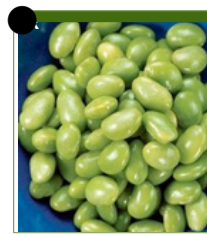
Bell peppers



Squash



Eggplant



Soybeans



Rice Products

Apply Your Knowledge

Which Food Items are Common Food Allergen or Contains One?



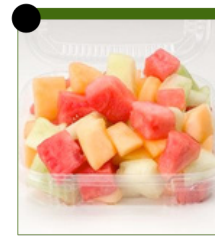
Tea



Cod



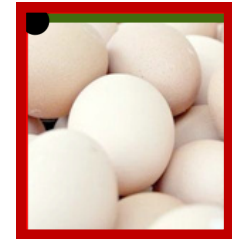
Wheat flour



Melons



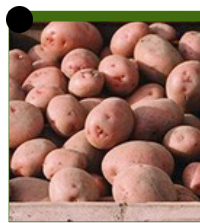
Peanut butter



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Crab legs



Potatoes



Mushrooms



Tomatoes



Almond Danish



Ice cream



Citrus fruit



Bell peppers



Squash



Eggplant



Soybeans

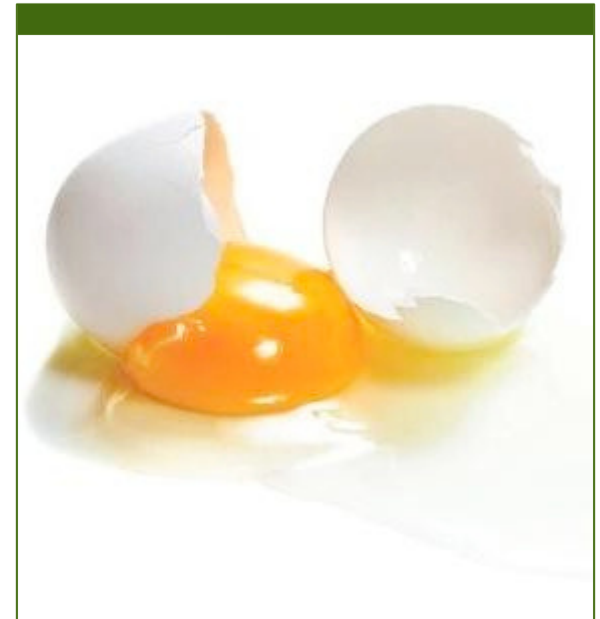


Rice Products

Preventing Food Allergen Contamination

Prevent Cross-Contact From Spilled Food:

- Immediately isolate spilled food containing an allergen from other food products.
- Inspect surrounding products for contact with the spilled food.
- Dispose of any open products in contact with the spilled food.
 - *The food may not need to be discarded if **in packaging that can be safely cleaned and sanitized.***
- Clean and sanitize the area.





Good Personal Hygiene

How and When To Wash Your Hands

Why handwashing is the most important part of personal hygiene:

- Hands can transfer pathogens to food.
- Handwashing is a critical step for avoiding food contamination.

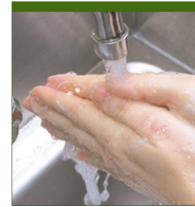


How To Wash Your Hands

Hand washing should take about 20 seconds.



- **Step 1: Wet hands and arms**
 - Use warm running water.



- **Step 4: Rinse hands and arms thoroughly**
 - Use warm running water.



- **Step 2: Apply soap**
 - Apply enough to build up a good lather.



- **Step 5: Dry hands and arms**
 - DO NOT use your apron or any part of your clothing.
 - Use a single-use paper towel or hand dryer



- **Step 3: Scrub hands and arms vigorously**
 - Scrub them for 10 to 15 seconds.
 - Clean fingertips, under fingernails, and between fingers.



After washing your hands, use a paper towel to:

- Turn off the faucet
- Open the restroom door

When To Wash Your Hands

- Wash hands before beginning your shift
- Wash hands after using the restroom
- Wash hands after touching your hair, face, or body
- Wash hands after touching anything that may contaminate them, such as dirty equipment, work surfaces, and cloths.
- Wash hands after leaving and returning to the food-handling area
- Wash hands when handling raw meat, poultry, or seafood (before and after)
- Wash hands before putting on gloves at the start of a new task
- Wash hands after eating or drinking
- Wash hands after touching clothing or aprons
- Wash hands after chewing gum
- Wash hands after handling chemicals that can make food unsafe
- Wash hands after taking out garbage
- Wash hands after sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue
- Wash hands after using tobacco products (including chewing tobacco, cigarettes, and devices that deliver nicotine electronically, such as e-cigarettes, vapes, and mods)

Using Hand Antiseptics

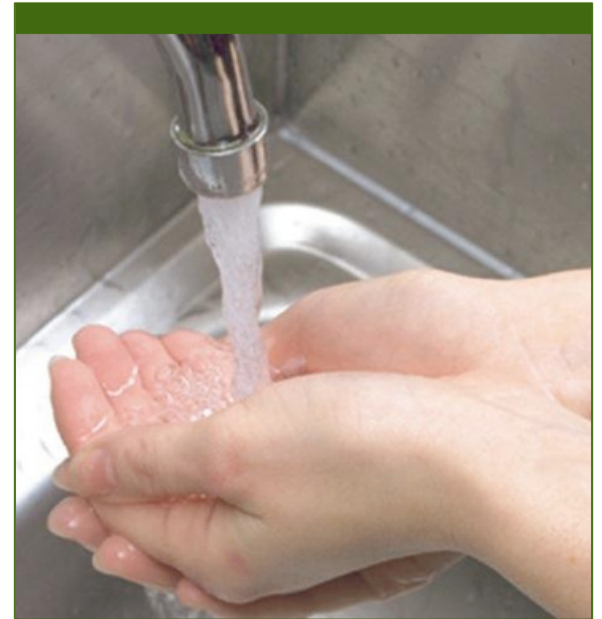
If you use hand antiseptics:

- **NEVER** use them instead of handwashing.
- Use an antiseptic **after** washing hands.
- Wait for the antiseptic to dry before touching food or equipment or putting on gloves.
- Follow manufacturer's directions



Where To Wash Your Hands

Wash your hands only
in a designated
handwashing sink.



Where To Wash Your Hands

DO NOT use handwashing sinks for other things.



- **NEVER** dump dirty water in them.
- **NEVER** prep food in them.
- **NEVER** wash tools or equipment in them.

Make sure handwashing sinks are easy to get to and are not blocked.

- **NEVER** stack food, equipment, or supplies in them or in front of them.



Stocking The Handwashing Sink:

A stocked sink should have

- Running water at a temperature of at least 85°F (29°C)
- Liquid soap
- Single-use paper towels or hand dryer
- Garbage container



Other Hand-Care Guidelines

Use Gloves Correctly:

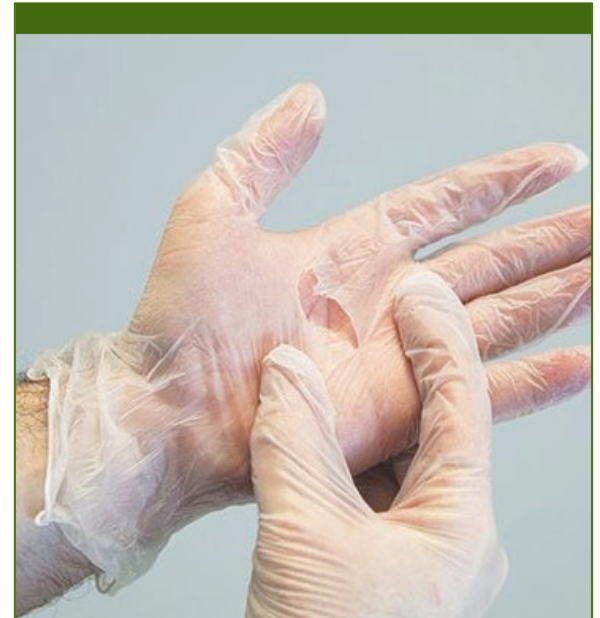
- Only use single-use gloves when handling food
- Make sure the gloves fit your hands.
- They should not be too tight or too loose.
- **NEVER** blow into them.
- **NEVER** roll them to make them easier to put on.
- **NEVER** rinse, wash, or reuse gloves.



Other Hand-Care Guidelines

Gloves Should Be Changed:

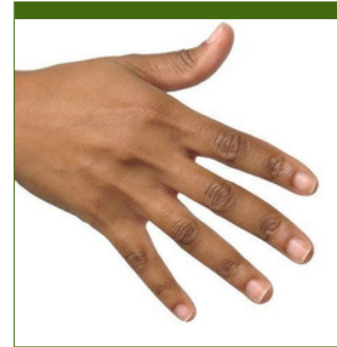
- As soon as they become dirty or torn
- Before beginning a different task.
- Before or after handling any food with a known food allergen.
- After handling raw meat, seafood, or poultry, and before handling ready-to-eat food.
- After an interruption, such as taking a phone call.



Other Hand-Care Guidelines

Hands and Nails:

- Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Long fingernails can be hard to keep clean.
- If you will be handling exposed food, you must use single-use gloves if you are wearing nail polish or false fingernails
 - *These can hide dirt under nails and may flake/break off into exposed food or food containers*



Cover Infected Wounds Correctly:

Infected wounds can contain bacteria. To keep food safe, make sure wounds are covered correctly.



- **Hands or wrist:** Cover with a bandage or finger cot that prevents fluid from leaking out. Then place a single-use glove over the cover.
- **Arms:** Completely cover with a bandage that prevents fluids from leaking out.
- **Body:** Cover with a dry, durable, tight-fitting bandage.

What To Wear

Hair Covering: Always wear a clean hat or other hair covering when:

- Repackaging food
 - *(FBNA agency partners should NOT repackage bulk items—details are explained further in this training.)*
- Working in areas used to clean utensils and equipment
 - *Men with beards and mustaches should also wear a beard restraint*

Clothing and Aprons:

- Wear clean clothes whenever working with or around food.
- Remove and throw away disposable aprons when leaving food-handling areas
- Store personal belongings away from food.

Jewelry:

- **Remove jewelry from hands and arms:**
 - Before handling exposed food.
 - When working in or around food-handling areas
- **DO NOT wear:**
 - Rings - *except for a plain band*
 - Bracelets - *including medical bracelets*
 - Watches



Other Important Practices



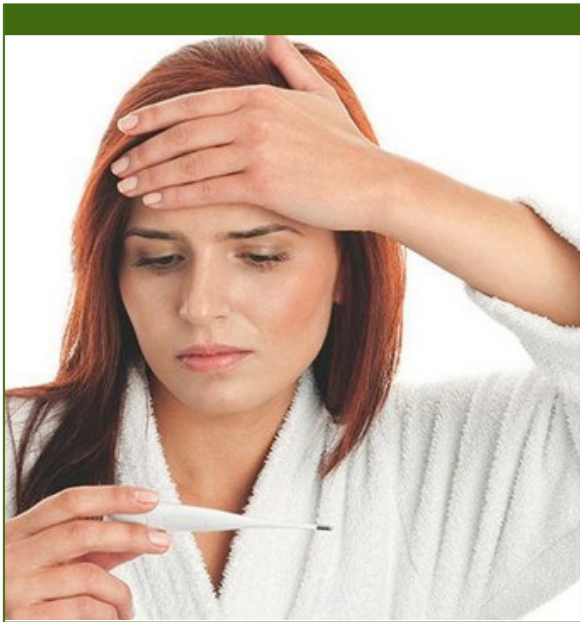
NEVER do the following in food handling or food storage areas:

- Eat
- Drink
- Smoke
- Chew Gum
- Use chewing tobacco, cigarettes, or devices that deliver nicotine electronically, such as e-cigarettes, vapes, and mods

Saliva contains pathogens that can cause foodborne illnesses.

What To Do if You Are Sick:

If you are sick, you could spread pathogens to food & equipment. This could make others you work around or distribute food to sick.



Tell your director or supervisor:

- If you have been diagnosed with a foodborne illness
- If you have any of these symptoms:
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Jaundice (yellowing of skin & eyes)
 - Sore throat with a fever



Receiving and Storing Food Safely

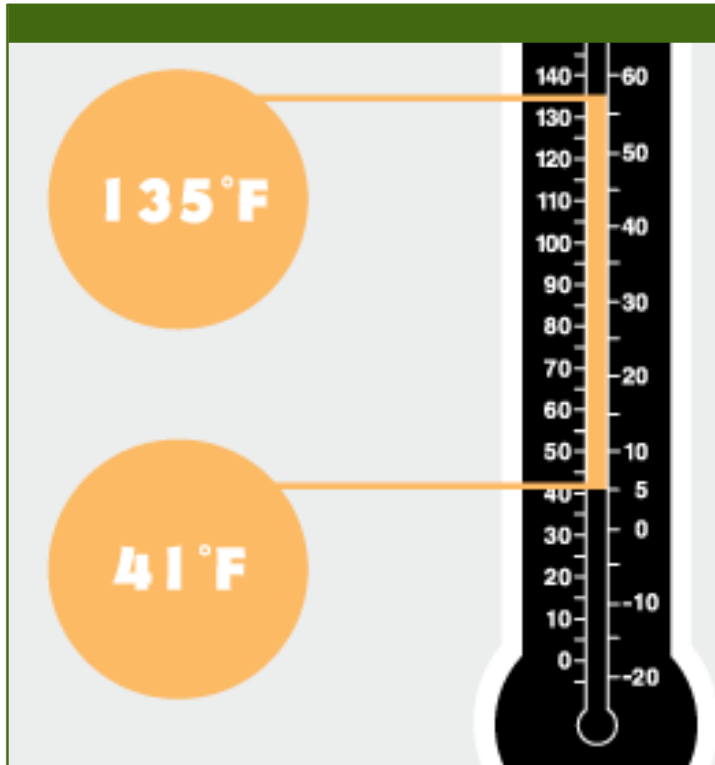
Controlling Time and Temperature During Receiving

Food temperatures must be controlled from the minute it's picked up from the donor or food bank to the minute it is handed to the food recipient.

- This includes the time food spends in the warehouse, while being transported, and at the agency partner location.
- This is called the “cold chain” which, if broken, can result in foodborne illness.
- The cold chain is broken whenever food is held at temperatures between 41°F and 135°F (5°C and 57°C).

Temperature Danger Zone

What Is Important About This Temperature Range?



The temperature range between 41°F and 135°F (5°C and 57°C) is called the **Temperature Danger Zone**.

Pathogens on food can grow in this range and cause a foodborne illness.

Common Thermometers in Food Banks and Agencies

A thermometer is the most important tool for controlling food temperature. Food banks and agency partners typically use three types of thermometers, each designed for a specific monitoring function.



Infrared thermometer



Thermocouple &
other digital
thermometers



Bimetallic stemmed
thermometer

Calibrating a Thermometer

Thermometers must be calibrated (adjusted) regularly to make sure the readings are correct.

- **Infrared Thermometers** (Temp Guns) **MUST** be sent back to the manufacturer for calibration.
- **Digital Thermometers** will either have directions provided or need to be sent to the manufacturer for calibration.
- **Bimetallic Stemmed Thermometers** can be calibrated on site.
 - *However, these are only used during the cooking process so most agency partners will not have need of them.*

Calibrating a Bimetallic Stemmed Thermometer:

Ice-Point Calibration Method

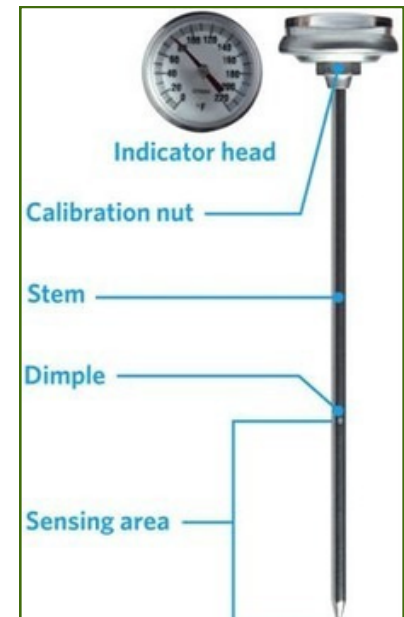


Step One:

- Fill a large container with crushed ice and tap water.
- Stir well.

Step Two:

- Put the thermometer stem or probe into the ice water.
- Make sure the sensing area is under water.
- DO NOT let the probe touch the container.
- Wait 30 seconds or until the indicator stops.



Step Three:

- Hold the calibration nut with a wrench or other tool.
- Rotate the thermometer head until it reads 32°F (0°C).

Inspecting Food During Receiving To Make Sure It Is Safe

What Should You Look for When Inspecting a Delivery Vehicle Before Unloading It?

- Overall condition of the vehicle
- Signs of pests in the product or vehicle
- Correct truck temperature
- Objectionable product (e.g., homemade product)
- Door locks and seals that are in place and functioning
- Condition of the product

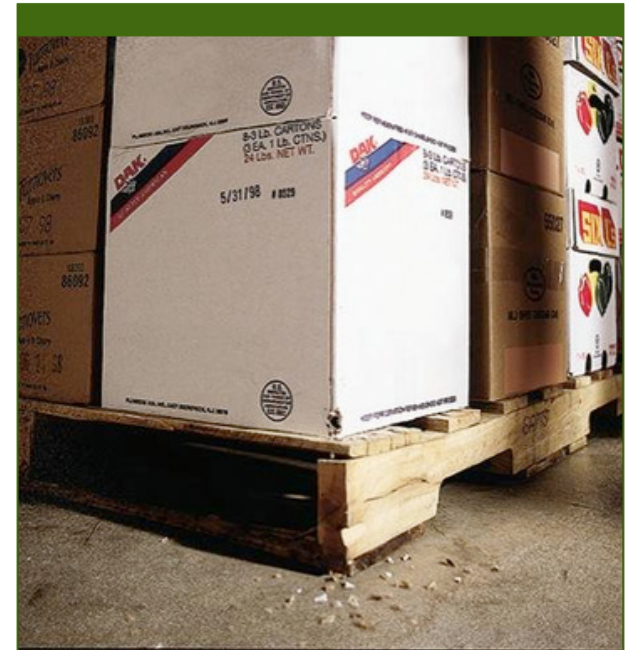


Reject the Food if the Delivery Vehicle/Containers:

- Do not meet acceptable standards
- Contain pests
- Are excessively dirty/unsanitary

The warehouse will inspect all vehicles intended for transporting food to agency partners.

If the vehicle **does not** meet required safety and sanitation standards, the warehouse **reserves the right to refuse** loading the order.



Inspecting Food During Receiving To Make Sure It Is

Reject Any Food That Has Not Been Received at These Temperatures

Type of food	Temperature
Refrigerated food	41°F (5°C) or lower.
Frozen food	Frozen solid. Recommend 0°F (-18°C) or lower.
Cut produce	41°F (5°C) or lower.
Whole produce	Dry storage temperatures. For more information see Feeding America's produce handling guidelines.

Storing Food Safely

General Storage Guidelines:

- Store **refrigerated food at 41F (5°C)** or lower
 - This includes cut produce
- Keep frozen food **frozen solid**.
 - The **required temperature is 0F (-18C) or lower**.
- Store food only in designated food storage areas
- Store food at least **six inches(15cm) off the floor**
 - *This includes food stored inside walk-in refrigerators & coolers*
- Store food away from walls.
- Store food only in containers made for food.
- Wrap or cover prepared food before storing it. **Only applies to sites that serve prepared meals*
- Store **ready-to-eat food above raw meat, seafood, and poultry**
 - *DO NOT store these items on the same shelf or pallet.*

What Is the Purpose of This Date?



Packing / Manufacturing Date

- Used by manufacturers for tracking and recalls
- Not an expiration date



Best-By or Best if Used By Date:

- This is a quality date.
- Tells the date by which the product should be eaten for best flavor or quality.
- The product is still safe to eat past this date



Sell-By Date

- A quality date
- Tells the store how long to display the product for sale
- The product is still safe to eat past this date



Use-By or Expiration Date

- This is the last date recommended for the product while at peak quality.
- The product is still safe to eat past this date.

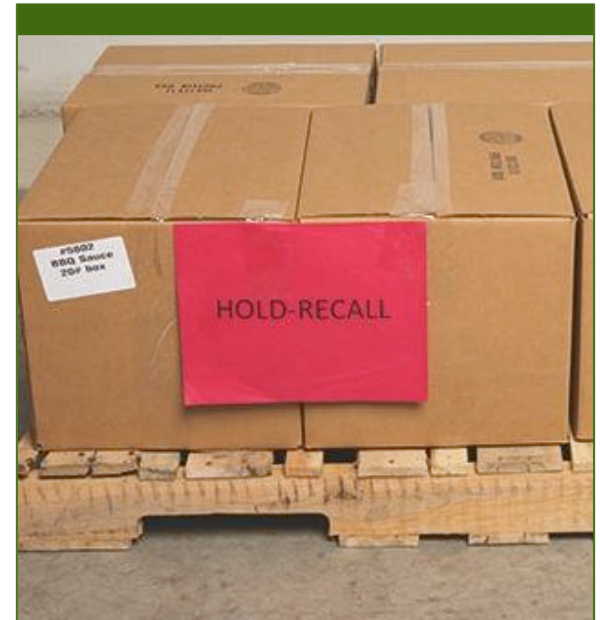
Shelf-Life for Refrigerated Food in Storage:

- If food has a sell-by date or no date at all, follow Feeding America guidelines to either:
 - Freeze the food
 - Distribute the food
- Freezing food will keep it safe for long periods of time.
 - Quality will suffer if frozen food is stored too long
 - Follow Feeding America's recommended storage times.
- Feeding America guidelines are provided in the Agency Partnership Handbook.



Handling Recalled Food

- Feeding America issues recall notices for all issued recalls from:
 - FDA
 - USDA
- Ask your director or supervisor how to handle recalls at your food bank or agency.
- The Food Bank of North Alabama communicates all active recalls and any related guidance for bulk items so partners can respond quickly and safely.



Rotating Food Using FEFO

Follow the first-expired, first-out (FEFO) method if the food has a use-by or expiration date.

1. Check the use-by or expiration date.
2. Store food that will expire first in front of items that will expire later.
3. Use the food stored in front first.

This is the most common method utilized by agency partners.

Rotating Food Using FIFO

FIFO = First In, First Out

Step 1: Check the delivery date.

Step 2: Store food with the earliest delivery date in front of food with later dates.

Step 3: Use the food stored in front first.





Evaluating, Repacking, and Transporting Food Safely

Evaluating The Condition Of Food

Discard Cans if They Have These Problems:



- Severe dent in can seams



- Rust that cannot be wiped off



- Crushed cans that are not stackable
- Deep dents in can body



- Holes
- Visible signs of leaking (indicated by stained labels)



- Swollen or bulging ends



- Missing labels
- Unreadable labels due to stains or tears
- No code dates

Evaluating The Condition Of Food

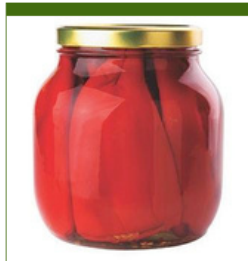
Discard jars and bottles with these problems:



- Swollen lids
- Rusted lids
- Dented lids



- Loose lid
- Button in lid is raised (broken seal)
- Missing seal (unless inner seal is intact and not discolored)



- Missing label
- Unreadable label
- No code dates



- Signs of leakage
- Jar is chipped or broken



- Food contains mold or foreign objects
- Signs of dirt or mold under lid



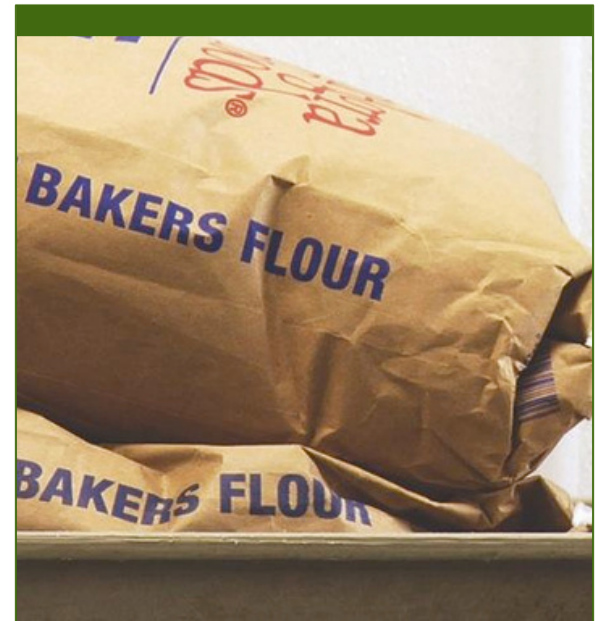
- Food is discolored
- Food has unusual appearance or separation

Never accept homemade food.

Evaluating The Condition Of Food

Checking Commercially Packaged Dry Food for Defects:

- Dry food containers include bags, boxes, sacks, or plastic wrapped items.
- Some dry food is packaged in a single package.
- Other food is double-packaged with the food contained in an inner package.
 - This includes flour, cereal, pasta, bread, and rice



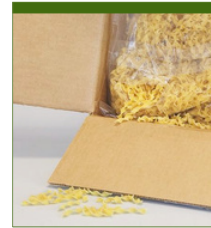
Evaluating The Condition Of Food

Discard commercially packaged dry food when it has an unusual appearance, is not in its original package, or has these problems:



Unlabeled

- Unlabeled or not correctly labeled
- Unreadable label
- No code dates



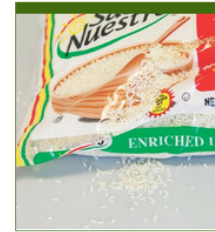
Inner package damage

- Double packaged food with inner package that is:
 - Damaged
 - Wet
 - or Stained



Gnaw marks

- Signs of Pests
 - Gnaw marks
 - Droppings
 - Insects (dead or alive)
 - Pin-sized holes in packaging

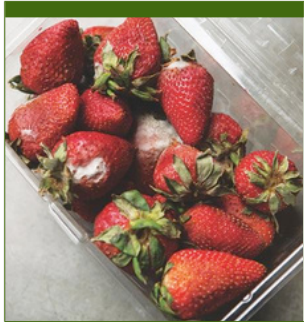


Punctured or cut packaging

- Single-packaged food that is exposed
 - Open packaging
 - Ripped or torn packaging
 - Punctured or cut packaging
 - Packaging split at the seams

Evaluating The Condition Of Food

Discard produce with these problems:



- Mold
- Decay or rot
- Bad odors



- Cut produce not at 41°F(5°C) or lower
- No code dates.

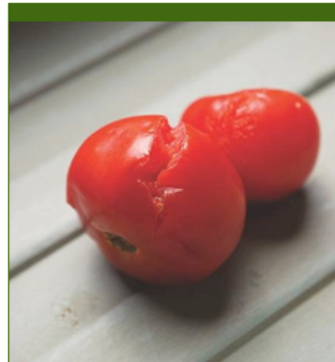


- Signs of insects

(live insects, insect bodies, or insect eggs)



- Repacked in packaging not safe for use with food.



- Skin not intact.
- Severe bruises

Bruises/breaks in the produce skin provide a way for pathogens to get inside.



Repacking Food & *Why Agency Partners Don't.*

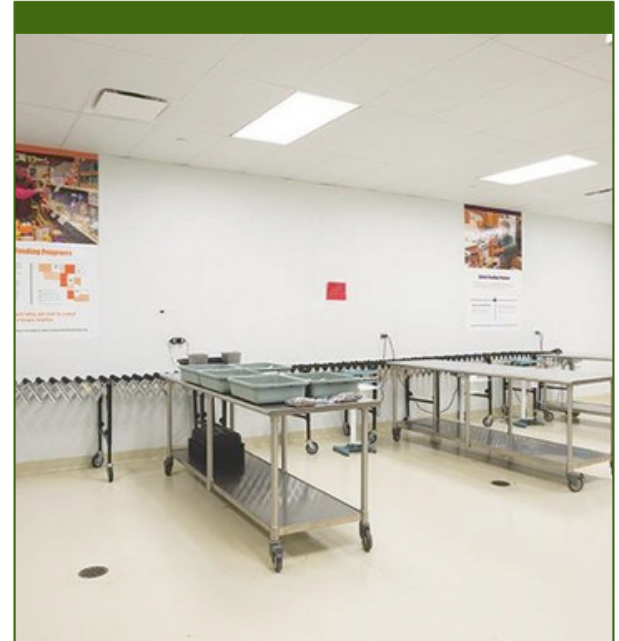
Repacking food is subject to strict regulations.

Health standards and Feeding America require that any repacking (breaking bulk items like rice, beans, or chicken into smaller units) occur only in a designated clean room. A clean room is a fully enclosed space used exclusively for repacking, built to **commercial foodservice construction standards**, compliant with **local health regulations**, and designed to minimize contaminants.

It must support high-level sanitation, including durable, easy-to-clean surfaces and the ability to maintain 55°F (13°C) or below when handling Time/Temperature Control for Safety (TCS) foods.

Because these requirements are extensive, most agency partners **are not able to meet the standards necessary** to safely repackage bulk food into smaller units. Food received through the Food Bank partnership **should be distributed in the package as received.**

Limited exceptions apply to items already individually packaged within a larger container (fruit cups, oatmeal, granola bars, etc.), as long as all required labeling remains intact or is properly attached—details will be covered later in this training.



Repacking Food

All repackaged food must contain a label that includes specific information about the product:



- Name of the food (common or usual name)
- Name and address of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor
- Quantity of the food in the package (e.g., pounds, ounces)
- List of ingredients and sub-ingredients in descending order by weight
- List of each major food allergen

****Because agency partners do NOT repackage food that isn't already in a self-contained package, we recommend copying the label from the original box and attaching it to each individual unit. For example, if you open a case of Pop-Tarts to distribute the individual packs, you must tape a copy of the original label to each pack. ****

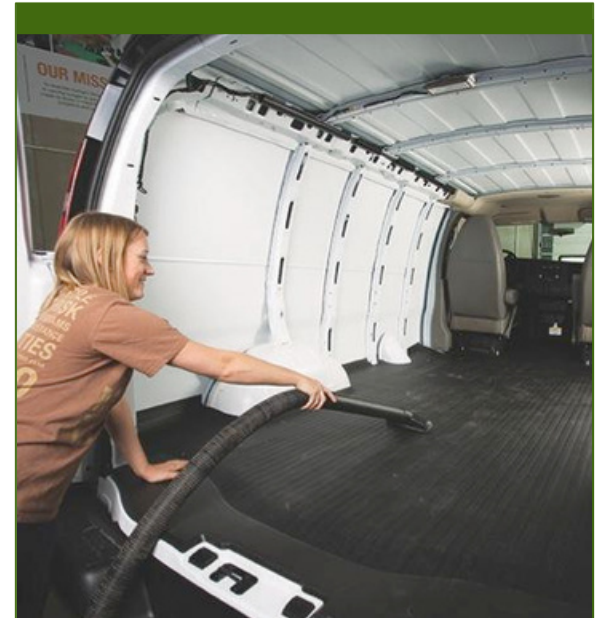
This may not apply to residential organizations; please confirm your program's requirements with our Agency Relations Team.

Loading and Distributing Food Safely

Delivery vehicles—whether private, rented, or commercial—must be regularly inspected and maintained to ensure food is protected from contamination.

Prepare Delivery Vehicles to Protect Food From Contamination:

- Clean the inside of vehicles at least once per week—or more often if needed—and remove any unnecessary personal items or trash.
- Make sure vehicles are free of pests.
- **NEVER** deliver food in vehicles used to haul garbage or livestock.
- **DO NOT** bring pets when delivering food, as they pose a major risk of physical, biological, or allergen contamination.
 - **This does not apply to trained service animals that are necessary for accessibility.*
- Keep items that could contaminate food separate from the area the food is being stored. This could include:
 - Oil, antifreeze, wiper fluid, gas cans
- Lock and seal delivery vehicles when they are not being loaded or unloaded.



Loading and Distributing Food Safely

It is **CRITICAL** that food remain at safe temperatures during transport. If not, bacteria on the food can grow and cause an illness.



Unrefrigerated Vehicles:

- If food is transported in an unrefrigerated vehicle, agency partners **MUST** use a passive cooling method to keep food cold, such as:
 - thermal blankets,
 - coolers,
 - or ice packs
- ***THE VEHICLE'S AIR CONDITIONING IS NOT AN ACCEPTABLE METHOD FOR MAINTAINING SAFE TEMPERATURES***

Refrigerated Vehicles:

- Check the temperature of refrigerated trucks to make sure that can keep food at **41F** (5°C) or lower.
 - Check the readout on the truck's temperature recording and monitoring device.
 - It is recommended that refrigeration units remain on and vehicle doors remain closed during periods of inactivity while holding product.
 - Refrigerated trucks must be pre-cooled prior to loading.

Loading and Transporting:

DO NOT:

- Put food by garbage containers
- Leave food outside and unsupervised
- Leave frozen or refrigerated food at room temperature
- Do not leave food in a non-temperature-regulated vehicle for an extended period of time or overnight.
- Store raw food over ready-to-eat food
 - Raw food includes raw meat, seafood, poultry, and shell eggs
- Store allergens over other products (remember the Big Eight)
- Store chemicals with food products

Loading and Transporting:



- Keep refrigerated food at **41°F (5°C) or lower** during transport.
 - *When possible, keep frozen food at temperatures that maintain it in a frozen state, ideally 0°F (-18°C) or below.*
- Keep food cold in unrefrigerated vehicles by covering it with thermal blankets, using coolers, or ice packs
- Load refrigerated and frozen food so that air can circulate around it
- Drive times in **unrefrigerated vehicles** should be limited to **30 minutes or less** when no passive cooling method is used.
 - *This is why passive cooling methods are required for agency partners, regardless of distance.*
- Check the temperature of refrigerated and frozen foods upon arrival to ensure the cold chain has remained intact.





Cleaning and Sanitizing

Cleaning Vs. Sanitizing

Cleaning:

Cleaning removes food and other dirt from a surface

Sanitizing:

Sanitizing reduces pathogens on a surface to safe levels



Cleaning and sanitizing will help to control the risk of pests, however the **most important reason** to clean and sanitize is to **prevent the spread of pathogens to food.**

Does It Need to be Cleaned or Cleaned and Sanitized?

Not all surfaces are handled the same way.

Some only need to be cleaned.

Others must be cleaned and sanitized.

- **Cleaned and Rinsed.**

- All surfaces, these include:
 - Walls and floors
 - Storage shelves
 - Garbage containers

- **Cleaned and Sanitized**

- Any surface that touches food. Examples:
 - Plastic food bins
 - Ladles
 - Scales
 - Prep tables
 - Sorting tables
 - Scoops

How to Clean and Sanitize Surfaces



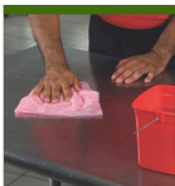
1. Scrape or remove food from the surface



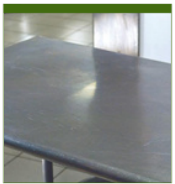
2. Wash the surface



3. Rinse the surface

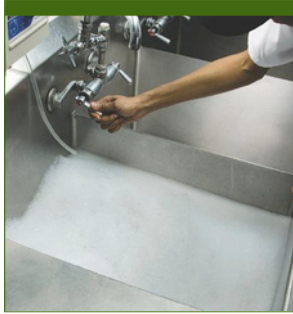


4. Sanitize the surface



5. Allow the surface to air-dry

Setting Up a Three-Compartment Sink



- **Sink 1: Washing Sink**
 - Fill with water at least 110°F (43°C)
 - Add detergent



- **Sink 2: Rinsing Sink**
 - Fill with water or leave empty if you spray rinse



- **Sink 3: Sanitizing Sink**
 - Fill with water.
 - Add correct amount of sanitizer
 - Check strength of sanitizer with a test kit.

Using a Three-Compartment Sink

1. Rinse, scrape, or soak the items before washing them.
2. Wash the items in the first sink.
3. Rinse the items in the second sink.
4. Sanitize the items in the third sink.
5. Air-dry the items.



Handling Garbage



- Remove garbage as quickly as possible.
- Clean the inside and outside of garbage containers often
- Clean garbage containers **AWAY** from food-storage areas
- Keep indoor containers covered when they are not in use.

Pests

Pests, such as insects and rodents, **carry pathogens that can make people sick**, and insect parts can even cause physical contamination. It's important to watch for signs of pest activity so issues can be identified and addressed quickly

Signs of Pests:



Droppings



Nests



Damage