



Three Safe Ways to Defrost Food

Refrigerator

- Plan ahead! 5 lbs of weight = 24 hours to defrost.
- Some areas of the refrigerator may keep food colder than other areas.
- After thawing, items should remain safe and of good quality for an additional day or two before cooking.
- Follow safe storage practices while defrosting items in the refrigerator.

Cold Water

- Faster but requires more attention.
- Product should be completely submerged in **cold**, running tap water. Water pressure must be strong enough to float off loose food bits in an overflow. Water temperature should be 70° F (21° C) or lower.
- The amount of time to thaw is based on the food temperature (food must remain below 41° F (5° C)). The time should not exceed 4 hours from beginning of thawing to cooking. Staff must monitor food temperature routinely.
- Food must be cooked before refreezing.

Microwave

- Quickest defrosting method.
- Food should be cooked immediately after thawing.
- Food must be cooked before refreezing.

Remember: NEVER thaw food on the counter and/or at room temperature!

Sources: US FDA, [2022 Food Code](#); US Department of Agriculture, [Food Safety and Inspection Service](#)

This project was supported in part by grant number 90PPNU0002 from the Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects with government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official ACL policy.

Created in partnership with the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs. For more information on NANASP, visit nanasp.org.