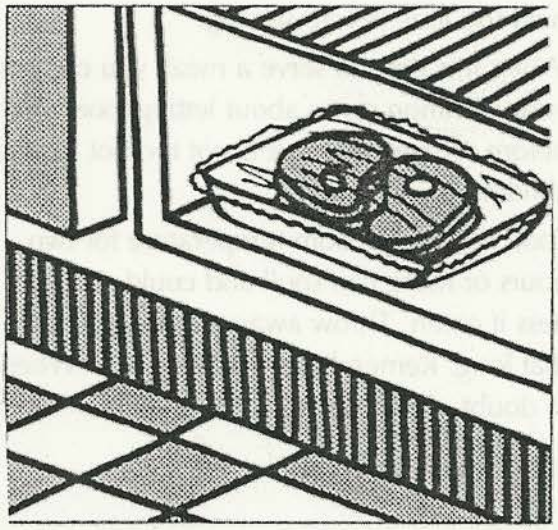
CARE Connection Number 29

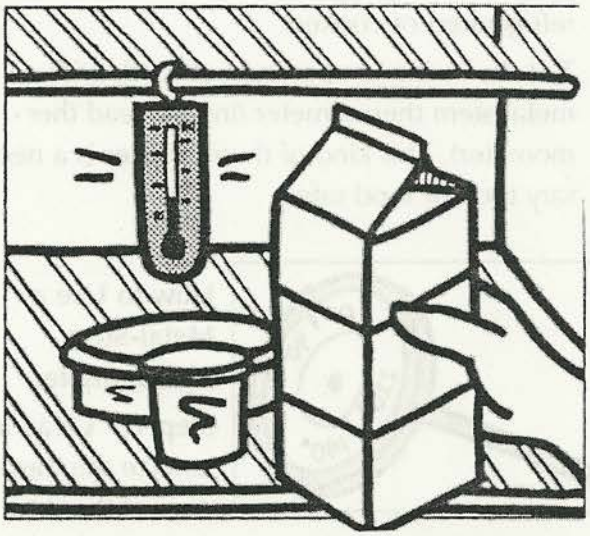
Keeping It Safe: Control Food Temperatures

Children can become sick from food poisoning (foodborne illness) if they eat food that has bacteria (germs) growing in it. One of the most important ways you can stop the growth of bacteria in foods is to control the temperature of food. This *CARE Connection* includes national guidelines on temperature control when storing, preparing, and serving food. Be sure to check with your sponsor or state agency about the temperature requirements in your state.

Food Storage

1. Store foods in your refrigerator at 40° F or below. Keep a working thermometer in the warmest part of your refrigerator so you know the temperature.





2. Store frozen foods at 0° F or below. Keep a working thermometer in the warmest part of your freezer so you know the temperature.

3. Cover or wrap all food stored in refrigerators or freezers.

4. In a refrigerator, store raw meat on the lowest shelves. This is important because juices from raw meat can drip onto another food and spread germs, which could cause foodborne illness (food poisoning).

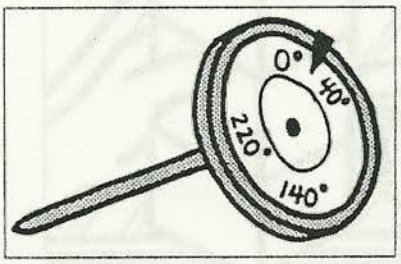
5. Store dry food in a cool place, like a cabinet or storeroom. Always cover and seal containers. Store food at least six inches above the floor.

Food Preparation

1. Thaw frozen food the safe way.
   - Thaw in the refrigerator
   - Thaw under cold, running water

   Never leave a frozen food on a counter top to thaw.
2. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Follow your state's guidelines for temperatures required for food safety.
   - Cold foods must be kept below 40° F
   - Hot foods must be kept above 140° F

   Plan your food preparation so food is at room temperature a very short time before it is either refrigerated or cooked.
3. Test the inside temperature of foods with a metal-stem thermometer (instant-read thermometer). This kind of thermometer is a necessary tool for food safety.



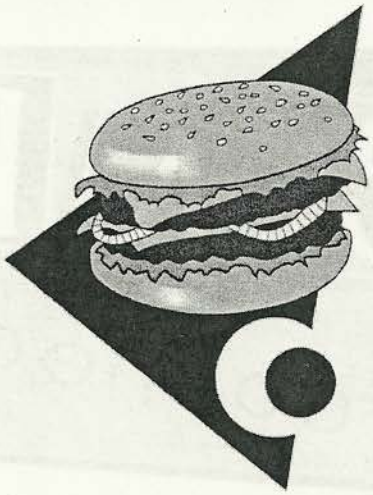
How to Use a Metal-Stem Thermometer

Step 1: Clean and sanitize the metal stem of the thermometer before and after you use it in a food.

Step 2: Stick the stem of the thermometer into the thickest part of the food, about two-inches deep. Be careful not to touch fat, bone, or the cooking pan. Do not leave the thermometer in the food during cooking.

Step 3: When the needle on the dial stops, read the temperature.

- Meat and poultry should be cooked to an inside temperature of at least 165° F for safety.
- Keep hot food above 140° F if you are holding the food before it is served.
- Keep cold food below 40° F before it is served.



Check with your sponsor, state agency, or local and state public health department for the safe food temperatures required in your state.

4. Cook meat and poultry products until well done. The only way to be sure a meat product is done is to cook it to an inside temperature of 165° F or higher.

Hamburger or ground beef is done when

- the inside temperature is 165° F or higher,
- the juices run clear, and
- it is brown or gray inside.

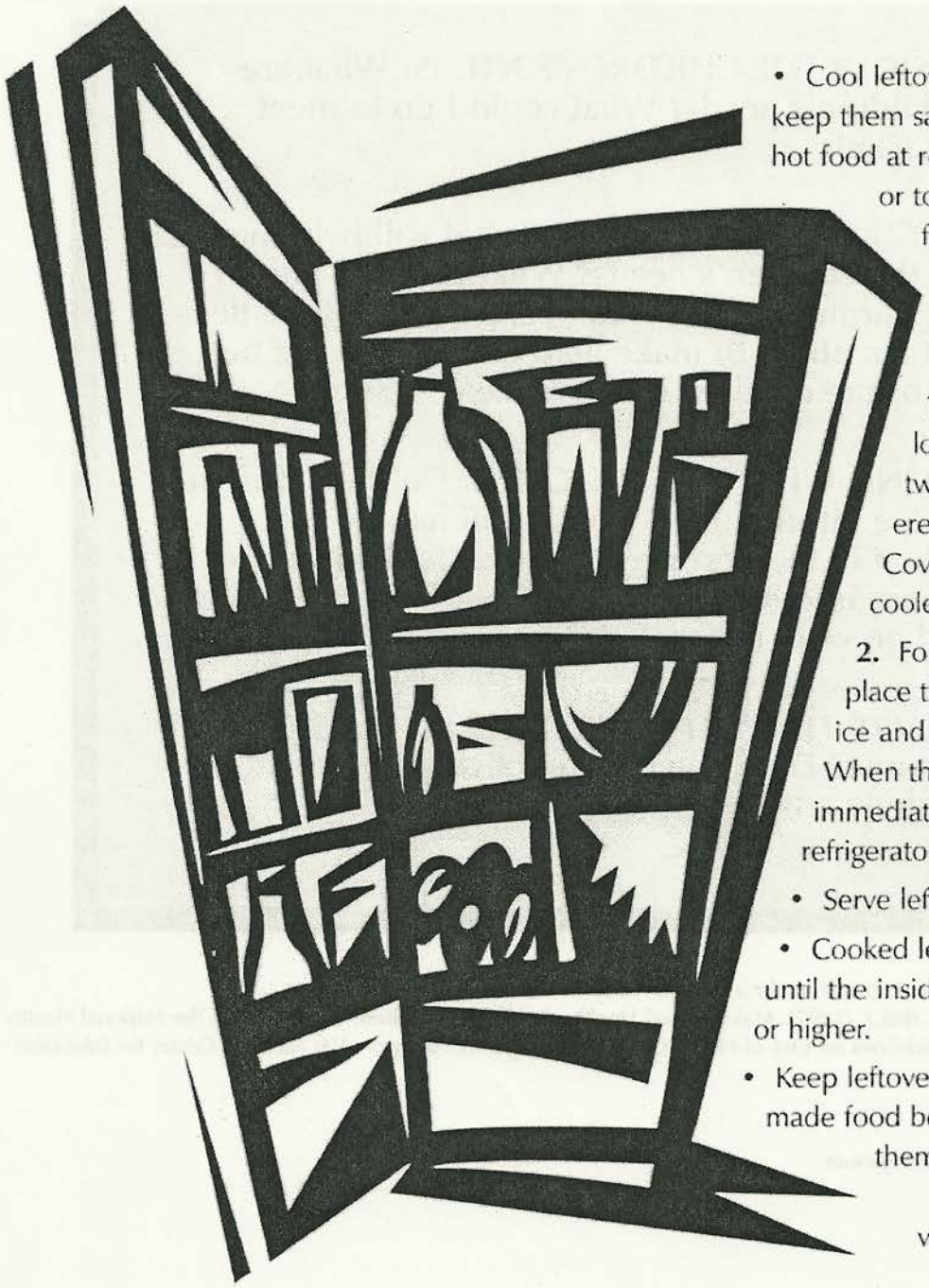
Chicken is done when

- the inside temperature is 165° F or higher, and
- the juices run clear when a fork or knife is stuck into it.

Food Service

- Keep cold foods in the refrigerator until just before serving.
- Plan food service so that hot foods are not held too long before serving.
- When it is time to serve a meal, you can use your common sense about letting food cool before serving so that it is not too hot for the children to eat safely.
- Food left out at room temperature for two hours or more can spoil and could cause illness if eaten. Throw away any food left out that long. Remember the old saying, "When in doubt, throw it out."

How to Store and Serve Leftovers the Safe Way



- Cool leftover hot foods quickly to keep them safe. It is not safe to leave a hot food at room temperature to cool, or to put a deep pot of hot food in the refrigerator to cool. Use one of these two methods to cool hot food.

1. Place hot food in shallow pans (no more than two-inches deep), uncovered, in the refrigerator. Cover when the food has cooled.

2. For large pots of hot food, place the pot in a sink filled with ice and cold water, and stir often. When the pot of food is cool, immediately cover and store in the refrigerator.

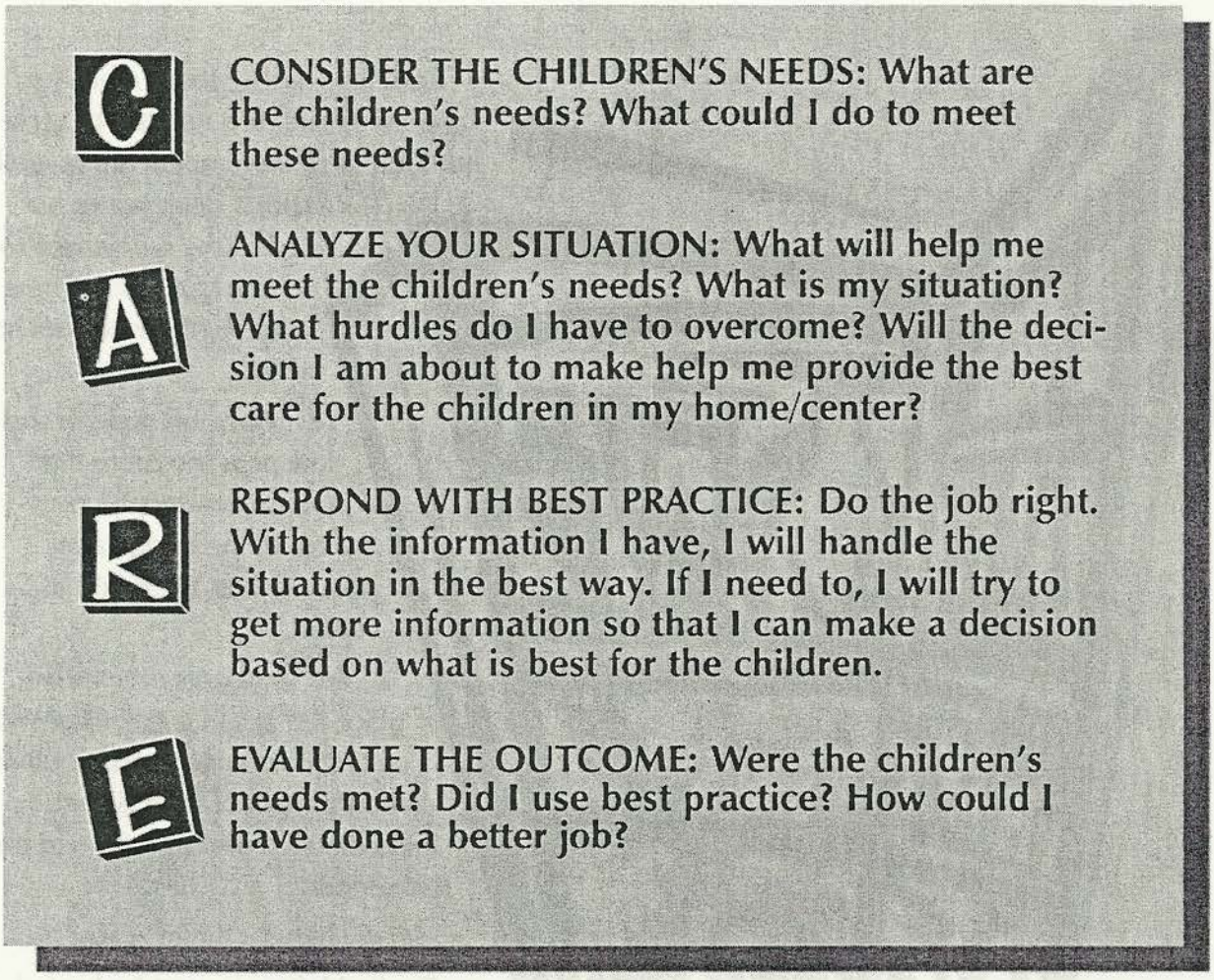
- Serve leftovers the next day.
- Cooked leftovers must be heated until the inside temperature is 165° F or higher.
- Keep leftovers separate from freshly-made food because it is not safe to mix them together. For example, mixing leftover tuna salad with freshly-made tuna salad would not be safe.
- Throw away any baby food left in dishes.
- Store unused baby food in the original jar.

BE SAFE!

Best Practice for Food Safety

Remember: when in doubt, throw it out.

Think about the way you control food temperatures to keep food safe. Use the CARE Process below to help you make the best decision to show you CARE.



For more information about sanitation in child care, order a copy of
Graves, D.E., Suitor, C. W., & Holt, K. A. (Eds.). (1997). Making Food Healthy & Safe for Children: How to Meet the National Health and Safety Performance Standards—Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs. *Arlington, VA: National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.*

Order from:
National Maternal and Child Health Clearinghouse
2070 Chain Bridge Road, Suite 450
Vienna, VA 22182-2536
Phone (703) 356-1964
Fax (703) 821-2098

Food Safety Grab and Go Lesson

Keep Food Safe: Clean, Sanitize, and Disinfect

If a dishwasher is not available, use a sink with three compartments to wash, rinse, and sanitize dishes. If the sink does not have three compartments, use one or two large dishpans as the second and third compartments. Follow the five steps below.

Step 1: Scrape food off surfaces before washing.

Step 2: Wash the dishes or equipment in hot, soapy water. Use clean dishcloths each day. Do not use sponges because they can harbor germs.

Step 3: Rinse the dishes well in clean hot water, so that no soap is transferred to the chlorine bleach solution in Step 4. Do not mix bleach in with the soapy water. Soap stops bleach from sanitizing.

Step 4: Sanitize the dishes by using ~~either~~ the chlorine bleach solution ~~or hot water method.~~

Step 5: Allow the dishes and equipment to air dry. Do not dry with a cloth or towel, as this may spread germs.

> ***Read the label on the bleach bottle:**
> Sodium hypochlorite is the active ingredient in chlorine bleach. Different brands of bleach may have different amounts of this ingredient; the measurements shown below are for bleach that contains 6% to 6.15% sodium hypochlorite. Read the label to find out the concentration of sodium hypochlorite.

Chlorine bleach solution method:
Soak the dishes for at least one minute in a sanitizing solution*, a mixture of 1 Tablespoon of unscented chlorine bleach + 1 gallon of cool water (hot water stops bleach from sanitizing) Remember to use test strips to check for correct concentrations . Remove dishes from the bleach solution and allow to completely air dry. Check with the local health department for specific requirements.