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## Which Foods Should You Keep in the Fridge?

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Although everyone knows the importance of keeping meat, fish, poultry and dairy foods in the fridge, many people don't realise that the same rule also applies to many other foods such as rice, noodles and pasta. There's no need to refrigerate uncooked rice and dried pasta and noodles, but rice, pasta or noodles that have been cooked, or fresh pasta and noodles, need to be refrigerated. If they are left standing on the kitchen bench, in a saucepan on the stove overnight, or on the counter in a shop or restaurant, germs can grow on these foods and make you sick. The same goes for Chinese sweets made from sago, Chinese dumplings and any food prepared with mayonnaise such as salads and sandwiches - these all need refrigerating until ready to eat.

What if you are buying these foods from a shop and notice that they are displayed on the counter instead of stored in the fridge? Explain to the shopkeeper that you would like foods that have been stored in the fridge. If no foods are available from the fridge, buy them from a shop where they are sold directly from the fridge. (Storing these foods in the fridge doesn't mean they're not fresh. Many fresh foods are normally stored in the fridge for safety reasons.)

Most cases of food poisoning are caused by eating food, which has been left out of the fridge for too long. Although food poisoning can happen at any time of the year, it is more common in the warmer summer months. This is why anyone cooking food at home or in a restaurant or shop should understand how to keep food safe. The simplest rule to remember is that food should be kept either piping hot or very cold. The reason for this is that very high or very low temperatures kill the germs that cause food poisoning. Germs can soon grow on food, which is left standing at room temperature. Remember that

taste, smell and appearance of food doesn't always tell you if a food is "off" - food can look, taste and smell okay and still be contaminated with germs that can make you ill.

If you are serving cold food, always serve it directly from the fridge. This applies particularly to seafood, meat, poultry, vegetables, salads, rice salads, desserts and cakes containing cream or imitation cream.

What if you have just cooked a hot dish, which you need to refrigerate? Is it okay to put it in the fridge while it's still hot? Yes, but it's best to store it in a way which enables the food to cool quickly in the fridge. You can do this by storing the food in a large shallow container or dividing it into smaller portions and refrigerating in small, shallow containers. If you have bought a takeaway chicken to eat later at home, it's best to remove it from its foil bag and cut it into smaller pieces before refrigerating. Any leftover canned food should also be put into a covered container and refrigerated straight away.

If you take meat, poultry or fish out of the freezer, allow it to defrost slowly in the fridge, or defrost it in a microwave oven. Leaving food to defrost outside the fridge gives germs the chance to grow. Don't refreeze meat, poultry and fish that has been defrosted - refrigerate for up to 24 hours or cook them immediately.

Uncooked minced meat, offal, poultry and seafoods need very careful storage in the fridge, so always store them in the coldest part of the fridge. Always make sure these raw foods cannot drip on to cooked foods below - this can transfer food poisoning germs on to cooked food.