

Use Caution if Food has Thawed

Partial thawing and re-freezing can ruin the quality of foods, like fruits, vegetables and prepared foods. Red meats are affected less than many other foods. However, they may still be safe to eat. If a frozen food is thawed and still at or below 40°, the food may be cooked and used immediately.

You may safely re-freeze some foods if they still contain ice crystals or if they have been kept at 40°F or below for no more than two days.

- **Fruits.** Re-freeze fruits if they taste and smell good. Fruit that is beginning to ferment is safe to eat, but will have an off-flavor. Use off-flavor fruit in cooking.

- **Frozen dinners.** Do not re-freeze frozen dinners that have thawed. Cook and eat thawed frozen foods and frozen dinners right away if they are still cold. If any foods are warm or smell bad, don't eat them.

- **Vegetables.** Do not re-freeze. Bacteria in these foods grow fast. Spoilage may begin before bad odors develop. Some spoilage may be very toxic. Re-freeze vegetables only if ice crystals remain throughout the package. But, when in doubt, throw them out.

- **Meat and Poultry.** Meat and poultry become unsafe to eat when they start to spoil. Examine each package carefully. If odor is offensive or questionable or if the freezer temperature has exceeded 40° F for two hours or longer, don't use the meat. Discard all stuffed poultry. Cook thawed but unspoiled meat or poultry right away. After cooking, meat can be re-frozen, but it's not recommended.

- **Fish and shellfish.** These spoil easily. Do not re-freeze unless there are ice crystals throughout the package. Seafood may be spoiled, EVEN if it doesn't smell bad.

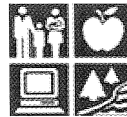
- **Ice cream.** Do not re-freeze melted ice cream. Throw it out or eat it as a liquid before an off-flavor develops.

For more information on Food Safety, visit the following web sites:

www.WWHD.org
www.Foodsafety.gov
www.fda.gov
www.Medlineplus.gov

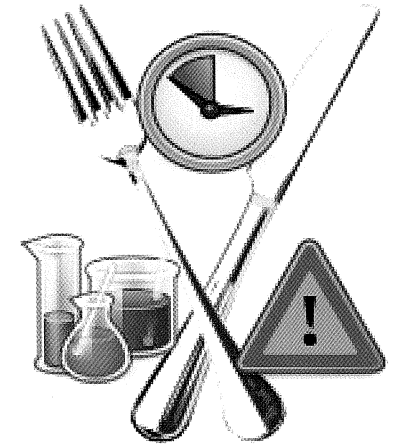
The Westport Weston Health District is a governmental agency enabled by State Statute that provides public health services. Health District program areas include environmental health, prevention of disease, health promotion, emergency management and public education.

Office hours are 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday and by special appointment.



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Food Safety During A Power Outage



Some Things To Consider About Staying Healthy

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Food Safety During a Storm

If you think you might lose power, turn your freezer and refrigerator thermostats to the coldest settings.

Cover the freezer with blankets, quilts or some other covering: it will help to put crumpled newspaper or wood shavings between the freezer and the blankets. Do not lock the freezer or cover the air vent openings.

If you've already lost power, use these tips to keep food cold and safe to eat. ***Keep the Freezer Closed.***

With the freezer closed, foods usually will stay frozen at least a day, perhaps two or three days, depending on the quantity of insulation. Food in well-fitted, well-insulated four-cubic-foot home freezers will not begin to spoil in fewer than three days. In 12- to 36-cubic-foot freezers, food will not begin to spoil in fewer than five days, and may be all right for seven or eight days if the food is very cold. Open the freezer only to take out the food, to move it to a cooler or to add dry ice. With the door closed, food in most unopened freezers will stay below 40°F up to three days, even in the summer.

Thawing rate depends on:

- the amount of food in the freezer (a full freezer stays cold longer than one half full);
- the kind of food (a freezer filled with meat stays cold longer than a freezer filled with baked goods);
- the temperature of the food (the colder the food, the longer it will stay frozen. Never put hot or warmed foods into the freezer since this will increase the temperature.

- the freezer (a well-insulated freezer keeps food frozen longer than one with little insulation); and
- the size of freezer (the larger the freezer, the longer food stays frozen).

Safety of Refrigerated Foods During a Power Outage

Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature.

All chopped meats, poultry and seafood sandwich fillings should not be left without refrigeration for more than two hours. If any perishable foods have exceeded 40° F for more than two hours, throw them away.

Do not trust your eyes and sense of smell. Food may be unsafe, even if it doesn't smell bad or even if it looks safe.

You can extend your food supply by cooking all unspoiled meat immediately. Cooked meat needs to be kept above 140°F if it cannot be cooled below 40°F within four hours. A food thermometer will help you check food temperatures.

Here are some tips on popular perishable foods.

- Large, solid, unbound pieces of fresh beef or lamb, such as rump roast or leg of lamb, are least susceptible to quick spoilage.
- Uncured sausage is vulnerable to contamination because it is free of preservatives. Keep it frozen as long as possible, then cook before it completely thaws.

- Raw chopped meats, like hamburger, spoil quickly. Pork, fish and poultry spoil quickly, too. Dispose of these foods if they have been in a well-insulated, good working refrigerator without power for 12 hours or more and have exceeded 40° F.

- Hard cheese (like Romano, Cheddar, and Parmesan) usually keeps well at room temperatures. Throw these cheeses out when an off flavor or unusual mold develops. Other cheeses, such as cream cheese, opened containers of cheese spreads and cottage cheese, brie, and gouda spoil quickly.

- Milk spoils quickly without refrigeration. Throw out spoiled milk. Soured milk may be used in baking.

- Custard, gravies, creamed foods, chopped meats, poultry and seafood sandwich fillings spoil quickly when unrefrigerated. They are ideal growing places for organisms that can make you sick. Dispose of these foods if they have warmed to over 40° for two hours. Spoilage is hard to detect since the food may not smell or taste bad.

- Commercially made baked goods with cream fillings are not safe if unrefrigerated. Keep them cold, and eat as quickly as possible, or discard them.

- Canned goods can present health problems. If cans are swollen - throw them out. Do not taste! If the seams have rusted or burst, throw the cans out immediately.

