

NBSIA Member Services Safety Bulletin

June 2018

REFRIGERATOR HYGIENE AND SAFETY

Is your work refrigerator filled with mystery items, funky smells and five-month-old yogurt? The end of the school year is the perfect time to clean it out. A cleaner fridge is a safer fridge.

Proper Temperature

- Refrigerators should be kept at 40° F or colder to slow bacterial growth in foods.
- Avoid storing food in temperatures between 40° F and 140° F – this range is considered the “danger zone” where bacteria growth can double in just 20 minutes.
- Set freezers at a temperature of 0° F. Regularly check refrigerator and freezer temps.
- Pathogenic bacteria grows in the “danger zone” but does not affect taste, smell or appearance. Food that has been left out too long, or stored above 40° F may be dangerous to eat, although it looks fine.
- Spoilage bacteria grows at low temperatures, such as in the refrigerator. It eventually causes bad smells, slime or mold.

Food Storage Tips

- Read food labels for storage recommendations.
- Refrigerate condiments after opening. If an item hasn't been properly refrigerated, don't risk it. It's best to toss it.
- Be mindful of expiration dates. If something is past its use-by date or the food looks questionable, throw it out.
- If food looks or smells funny, or you can see mold forming, discard the item.
- A general rule of thumb for refrigerator storage for cooked leftovers is 4 days; raw poultry and ground meats, 1 to 2 days.



- If perishable food has been left in your office's refrigerator for more than a week, it should be thrown away.
- Make cleaning the work refrigerator a shared responsibility. Avoid conflict by sending an email to staff asking everyone to clean out their items by a certain date and time.

Keep It Clean

- Clean up spills immediately using hot soapy water.
- Keep the refrigerator smelling fresh by placing an opened box of baking soda on a shelf.
- Avoid using solvent cleaning agents, abrasives, and cleansers that may impart a chemical taste to food or ice cubes, or cause damage to the interior finish of your refrigerator.



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