

## 2 Hour, 4 Hour Rule

The 2 Hour / 4 Hour Rule tells you how long fresh potentially hazardous foods like cooked meat and foods containing meat, dairy products, prepared fruit and vegetables, cooked ricks and pasta, and cooked or processes foods containing eggs, can be safely held at temperatures in the danger zone (between 5°C and 60°C).

It takes time for food poisoning bacteria to grow to unsafe levels. Therefore, potentially hazardous foods can be held outside temperature control in the 'Temperature Danger Zone' within reason. The 2Hour / 4 Hour Rule is summarised below:

- If food has been out of temperature control for a total time of 2 hours or less, food must be refrigerated or used immediately;
- for a total time of 2 hours or more but less than 4 hours, food must be used immediately; and
- for a total time of 4 hours or greater, food must be thrown out and not used.

The total time includes all the time the food has been in the temperature danger zone, for example during delivery, preparation and transportation.

### **Example of 2 Hour / 4 Hour Rule:**

A sandwich is freshly prepared at 12 noon and placed in a non-refrigerated display case:

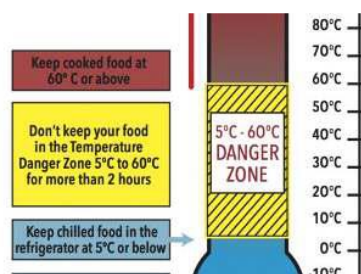
1. Can keep the sandwich out of refrigeration for up to 2 hours (until 2pm) and then refrigerate and bring out again later in the day, say 4pm (not to go back into the refrigerator for later use after this point). If not used by 6pm (4 hours out of temperature control in total) then thrown away.

2. Can keep the sandwich out of temperature control (refrigeration) for up to 4 hours straight – until 4pm – then it needs to be thrown away.

Foods that are not potentially hazardous and can be stored out of temperature control are foods like dried fruit, salted and dried meats, hard cheeses, dried pasta and other dried foods, breads, unopened canned and bottled food, spreads and sauces such as tomato and soy sauce.

### **Temperature Danger Zone**

The temperature range between 5°C and 60°C is known as the '*Temperature Danger Zone*' because in this zone food poisoning bacteria can grow to unsafe levels. Therefore, it is important to limit the time potentially hazardous food is in the danger zone. Potentially hazard food should be kept at or below 5°C or above 60°C. The 2 Hour / 4 Hour Rule should be followed where potentially hazardous food cannot be stored under temperature control but only for a limited time.



(Image source: Food Safety Information Council <http://foodsafety.asn.au/topic/temperature-danger-zone/>)

### **Thermometer to Check Temperatures**

If your business prepares, handles or sells any potentially hazardous food, it must have a thermometer which is accurate to  $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ . This means that when the thermometer shows a temperature of 5°C, the actual temperature will be between 4°C and 6°C. The thermometer must be available for use when foods are being prepared, so you may need more than one if foods are prepared in different places. A thermometer will assist to you ensure that you are keeping potentially hazardous food under temperature control and/or complying with the 2 Hour / 4 Hour Rule.

### **More information**

Visit Food Standards Australia New Zealand website for more information:  
<http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/foodsafety/standards/Pages/2-hour-4-hour-rule.aspx>

Alternatively, contact Council and ask to speak to the Environmental Health Officer.