

- **Casseroles / cooked foods with meat:**

Do not re-freeze cooked meals containing meat if they have thawed and are no longer icy. The texture is likely to change and it's hard to tell if cooked meals are starting to go bad. If the temperature of the food is still under 40°F, you may go ahead and microwave or bake them to an internal temperature of at least 165°F.



- **Ice cream:**

If it's soft but not thawed, re-freeze it. If it's thawed and liquidy, throw it away. The texture and flavor will be affected, and dairy products go bad if not kept cold.



- **Baked goods:**

As long as it's not moldy or stale, go ahead and re-freeze breads, muffins, un-iced cakes, tortillas, etc.



If you are certain that the temperature in your freezer has remained 40°F or less, then a good rule of thumb is to use the food within 2-3 days... like you would if you had stored it in your refrigerator.

If you re-freeze the food, plan to use it more quickly than you would have if it had stayed frozen all along, because there will be some loss of quality.

Use your best judgment. Don't risk illness for the sake of saving money. If you get sick, it won't be worth that \$10 roast or that \$20 turkey.

REMEMBER; when in doubt, throw it out!

**BE SAFE!
NOT SORRY!**

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**Can you re-freeze
food that has
thawed?**



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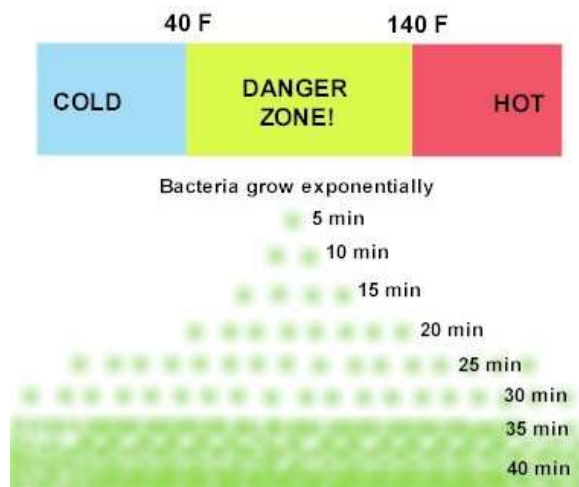
The power has been out for two days following a storm. Or you just discovered that the door of the freezer in the garage was left open all night. Some of the food has thawed. Can you re-freeze it?

Food is expensive. When you have a freezer, sometimes you buy in bulk when prices are lower. Then a disaster strikes and your frozen food thaws. You hate to waste food, but when is it safe to re-freeze your thawed frozen food and when should you pitch it? You don't want to get sick. What do you do?

Here are some guidelines:

Re-freezing food is not dangerous (though it can affect the texture). The danger is that food can spoil *before* it's re-frozen or *after it's thawed again* before being cooked and eaten.

The temperature "danger zone" is between 40°F and 140°F. The longer a food is in this zone, the more bacteria will multiply on it. Depending on the type of bacteria present, bacteria-laden food could make you or your family very ill. Children under 9 and older adults are particularly vulnerable to foodborne illnesses.



Toss thawed food:

- If the temperature of the food went above 40°F. That temperature is normal refrigerator temperature.
- If there is a bad odor or the food is slick or slimy.
- If you have doubts that the food is safe. It's better to throw away \$20 worth of food than to risk being ill.

Re-freeze:

- If the food still has ice crystals. Use your best judgment here. Large food items, like a frozen turkey, could be warm on the outside and therefore unsafe, but still have ice crystals in the interior of the cavity.
- If raw meat has thawed but is not icy, but is still below 40°F, you may cook it before re-freezing. Be sure to cook to a temperature of at least 165°F.
- Be careful with cooked prepared foods such as frozen entrees or casseroles. It's best to go ahead and cook them if they are below 40°F because re-freezing can cause loss of texture. Cook to an internal temperature of at least 165°F.
- Label the re-frozen food so you know to use it fast. Label it "Use as soon as thawed" so you know not to thaw it and let it sit in the refrigerator for a couple of days before cooking.

Okay. It's thawed. There are no ice crystals, but it's still really cold. Now what?

- **Red raw meat:** Re-freeze if it's still very cold, but it needs to have been below 40°F the whole time and have only been fully thawed for a day or two.



If it got above 40°F or the color or odor are bad, toss it.

• **Raw poultry, pork or lamb:**

Re-freezing is okay if it's still icy or very cold. If it's lower than 40°F but not icy, cook before re-freezing. If it's warmer than 40°F, slimy or smelly, throw it away.



• **Raw fish and shellfish:**

Do not re-freeze. It's too hard to tell if it's starting to go bad. Cook it immediately if it's cold and you think it's still good. Be careful with fish.



• **Fruits:**

Go ahead and re-freeze thawed fruits that don't smell bad or have signs of mold. They will be softer and lose their texture, but they won't make you sick. Why? It takes a long time for fruit to ferment.



• **Fruit juices:**

These are safe as long as they stayed under 40°F.



• **Vegetables:**

If they are still solid and icy, re-freeze. If they are thawed, do not re-freeze. If they are below 40°F, you could go ahead and cook them.

