

Refrigerator and Freezer management for non-catering departments

The refrigerators in the ward kitchens are provided for the storage of food which will be consumed by patients.

To ensure they are operating safely refrigerators should have either a digital display thermometer or a thermometer placed on the top shelf; this is the warmest part of the refrigerator.

A mercury thermometer should never be used in a refrigerator or freezer – it may break and contaminate food.

General points

- Never overload any refrigerator as it can reduce cold air circulation thereby reducing efficiency.
- Open refrigerator doors as little and for as short a time as possible to maintain the temperature.
- Freezers on the other hand work best when full.
- Never place hot foods in a refrigerator or freezer.
- Refrigerator contents **must not** include raw or cooked meat or eggs unless in an unopened pre-packed sandwich.
- Only perishable foods should be stored in the food refrigerator. **No other substances should be stored in the food refrigerators.**
- Storage of staff and patient's personal food must be restricted as far as possible. Where storage is essential, all items must be pre-packed and labelled with the person's name and date and discarded after 24 hours.
- Any out of date items should be discarded immediately.

Suitable refrigerator contents:

- Milk
- Butter
- pre-packed sandwiches
- unopened soft drinks
- pre-packed preserves for example jam
- sealed yoghurts and puddings
- re-sealable soft drinks etc within their use by date.

Operating temperatures

- Refrigerators should be kept at or below a temperature of 5°C.
- Freezers should be kept at or below a temperature of minus 18°C.
- All refrigerator and freezer temperatures should be checked **twice** daily and recorded – a person must be designated as responsible for ensuring that this is done.
- Temperature records should be kept for 3 months.
- If the temperature cannot be maintained, then Estates should be contacted and appropriate arrangements should be made for any contents until equipment is satisfactorily repaired. Food may have to be discarded if there is no other suitable storage.

Refrigerator cleaning

- The domestic assistant will be required to clean refrigerators weekly and spot check daily. Domestic assistant must wear a green apron when working in the kitchen area.
- A non-perfumed bactericidal detergent should be used.
- There must be a cleaning / defrosting arrangement in the cleaning specification for all kitchen appliances.