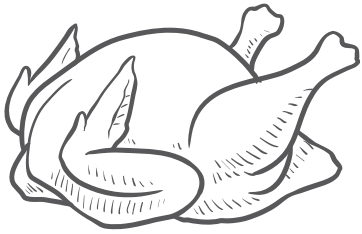


# Frozen Meat Storage Chart



- The color of meat may change (become darker or lighter in color) even when it is safely stored in a refrigerator or freezer. A change in color does not mean that meat has spoiled.
- To freeze meat and reduce color changes, store it in freezer quality material and remove as much air as possible. It is safe to freeze meat in its original packaging, but this type of wrap allows air in and can allow the quality of the meat to diminish over time.
- Do not use meat that smells bad, or feels sticky, tacky, or slimy.
- Do not refreeze meat that has already been thawed.
- Freezer burn does not mean that the food is unsafe to consume, but the white parts on the meat should be trimmed away before cooking.

Item	Months in Freezer
Bacon; Sausage; Ham; Hotdogs; Lunchmeat	1 to 2
Casseroles; Meat or poultry in gravy; Cooked meat; Soups & Stews	2 to 3
Frozen dinners & entrees; Uncooked ground meat; Uncooked poultry giblets	3 to 4
Cooked poultry	4
Uncooked roasts; Steaks; Chops	4 to 12
Uncooked wild game	8 to 12
Uncooked poultry parts	9
Uncooked poultry (whole); Egg whites or egg substitutes	12

Learn more about food storage at:  
[bit.ly/usda-food-storage](https://bit.ly/usda-food-storage)



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# Thawing Frozen Meat Safely

## Refrigerator Thawing

### Requires planning ahead

Some areas of the refrigerator may keep food colder for longer than other areas of the refrigerator.

### After thawing:

- Ground meat, stew meat, poultry, seafood should remain safe for 1 to 2 days.
- Beef, pork or lamb roasts, chops, and steaks should remain safe for 3 to 5 days.
- Thawed food can be refrozen without cooking.

## Cold Water Thawing

### Faster than refrigerator thawing.

The food has to be in a leak-proof package or plastic bag.

Submerge the bag in cold tap water, changing the water every 30 minutes.

### After thawing:

- Cook the food immediately.
- Do not refreeze until the food is cooked.

## Microwave Thawing

If using this method, plan on cooking your food immediately since the microwave may start to cook the food during the thawing process.

### After thawing:

- Cook the food immediately.
- Do not refreeze until the food is cooked.

## Cooking Without Thawing

Fastest method for when there is not enough time to thaw frozen foods.

It will take about 50% longer than the recommended cooking time for fully thawed or fresh meat or poultry.



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