

On behalf of
Meals on Wheels of Chester County
Barbara Myers RD, LD/N
Nutrition Consultant presents:

Food Safety –
What Every Volunteer Needs to
Know to Protect Our Seniors



We Love Our MOWCC Participants



As volunteers for Meals on Wheels, we want to provide our meal recipients with food that is safe to eat.

Whether our clients are elderly, frail, or disabled, they need our help getting meals before the food possibly has a chance to spoil. Many of our clients live alone and struggle to manage on a day- to –day basis.

Usually, our clients are seniors who possibly have lower immune systems than they had earlier in life. So, we want to provide the safest possible foods without causing gastrointestinal problems.

2 Ways Volunteers can help keep meals safe to eat...

1. Time

Please pick up meals as close to the time designated for your assigned food provider as possible.

Most routes take at least one hour to one and a half hours. So, if you are half an hour late, it is that much longer that the food is at room temperature.

After 4 hours from the time food leaves the oven or the refrigerator, it MUST be thrown away.

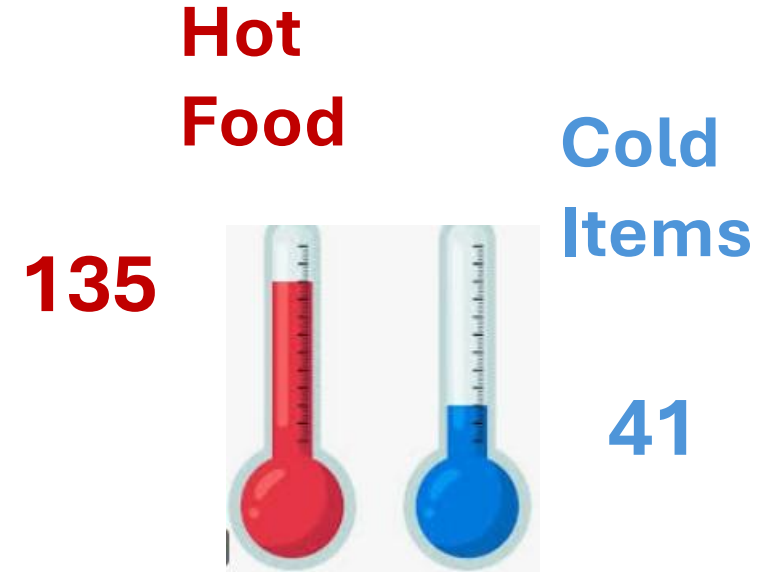


Time and Temperature are crucial.

2. Temperature

Every route needs 2 coolers or thermal carriers. One for hot meals and one for the cold bags (that have drinks and snacks).

Hot food should leave the kitchens at 165 degrees so that it gets to our participants at 135 degrees. Cold items should get to our participants at 41 degrees or colder.



Holding Food at Correct Temperatures

There are several types of coolers/thermal bags or containers that will help keep food at safe temperatures.



Temperature Danger Zone



Bacteria grow between 41 and 135 degrees F. They grow even faster when the temperature of food is between 70 to 125 degrees.

So, if a client has left a cooler at their door for volunteers to put meals in and the meal is there from the day before...

Please **THROW** away the old meal. Clients often forget or do not realize that a meal has been sitting for over 4 hours.

Weather Can Play a Key Factor

We worry particularly about meals in the hot summer months. Even when a client leaves a cooler out, please do not put the meal inside unless instructed to do so.

A client will often say, “I’ll be home within the hour. Please leave my meal.” That is okay.

But if it is hot out (i.e. 90 degrees) and there is no cooler, never leave a meal. They may not get home for hours... and food could quickly spoil.



Your car may contribute to food temperature

In the winter when temperatures are close to freezing, put cooler/thermal bag with hot meals inside the car (which is warmer than in your trunk).

In the summer...when temperatures are high, place the cooler/thermal bag with cold items inside your car where the air conditioning can help keep cold items at a safe temperature. **Or, throw an ice pack or frozen bottle of water in the cooler.**



Thank you to our Volunteers!!

You are making a huge difference!!

You not only deliver a healthy meal to some of our most vulnerable, often isolated, seniors....

You also provide an important safety check and show concern for someone who may not see another face the entire day.

If the client does not answer the phone or the door, or if something seems off about their behavior, please **call the office or send us an email**. Our staff will follow up and check on our homebound neighbors.

Phone #: 610-430-8500 or email: meals@mowcc.org

