

How Retail Delis Refrigerate Food: EHS-Net Findings and Recommendations

EHS-Net Recommends

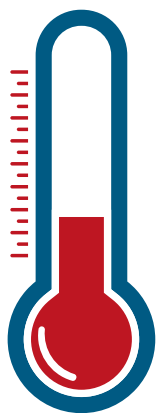
We recommend that food safety programs and retail delis

- Encourage or require kitchen managers to be certified in food safety.
- Monitor and record refrigerator temperatures.

Most delis keep food cold enough to reduce growth of *Listeria monocytogenes* (*Lm*) and other germs that cause foodborne illness and outbreaks, but 1 in 6 delis **do not**.



Why This Study Was Done



Lm causes the third highest number of foodborne illness deaths in the United States each year. *Lm* contamination of sliced deli meats at retail locations is a major cause of listeriosis illness and outbreaks.

To prevent this, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code recommends that delis refrigerate deli meats and certain other ready-to-eat foods at 41°F or colder. This reduces growth of *Lm* and other germs that cause foodborne illness and outbreaks.

Knowing more about how retail delis refrigerate food can help delis and food safety programs reduce risk of foodborne illness.

What the Study Described

The purpose of this study was to

- Describe how often retail deli refrigerators were warmer than 41°F.
- Describe deli and staff traits linked with better temperatures.

What the Study Found

Some delis keep refrigerators too warm, which can increase risk of foodborne illness. 1 in 6 delis had a refrigerator that was too warm.

Delis were more likely to refrigerate food at FDA-recommended temperatures if they:

- Had a kitchen manager certified in food safety.
- Recorded refrigerator temperatures.
- Only had one refrigerator.



Key Terms:

Foodborne illness: an illness caused by germs in food.

Foodborne illness outbreak: when two or more people have the same sickness after eating food from the same place.

Listeria monocytogenes: germ that causes the foodborne illness listeriosis, a serious infection.

Retail delis: delis that prepare or serve ready-to-eat foods to customers where, typically, food is taken elsewhere to be eaten. Grocery stores often have retail delis.

This study was conducted by the Environmental Health Specialists Network (EHS-Net).

EHS-Net is a federally funded collaboration of federal, state, and local environmental health specialists and epidemiologists working to better understand the environmental causes of foodborne illness.

Visit EHS-Net at www.cdc.gov/nceh/ehs/EHSNet.