

# Script – Print - Don't Over Stuff Your Refrigerator

## It can lead to food-related illnesses

During the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, it's easy to overstuff your refrigerator when entertaining guests at your gatherings. But there are many reasons why this can do more harm than good.

"For food safety reasons, having too much food in your refrigerator causes it to not work properly," says Nathan Hamman, manager, Wellness Services, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "If your refrigerator is overloaded there won't be proper air flow so the temperature could be raised too high. If you don't have a thermometer, either in your refrigerator or one with a digital display, you don't know how warm the food is and it needs to be kept at 40 degrees or colder in order for bacteria and mold and those type of things to now grow on the food."

In addition, Hamman also recommends not keeping food any longer than four days, tossing anything that has been left on the counter for a period of time, and paying attention to any food that may have a peculiar odor to it.

"You don't want to reheat things multiple times so if you're taking leftovers out, only take out the portion you're going to cook because if you keep heating it up and cooling down and heating it up and cooling down, you're more likely to have food borne illnesses," says Nathan Hamman, manager, Wellness Services, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "If it's been out because you've had a party, and it's been out for more than two hours, it's best to just throw it away rather than put it in the refrigerator."

Other helpful tips include looking at the expiration date on your food, checking for any discoloration and washing fruits and vegetables that may be dirty or contain pesticides and remember to wash your hands.

"Always wash your hands before you start cooking and any time when you switch from one type of food or another, especially if you're using raw meats, you don't want to cut those and then the produce," says Nathan Hamman, manager, Wellness Services, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "Make sure you use different knives and different cutting boards when you're washing and clean up after yourself so you don't touch contaminated surfaces."

OSF HealthCare offers a variety of cooking classes for the public. For more information, visit [www.osfhealthcare.org](http://www.osfhealthcare.org)