

The importance of “packing it safe”

Packing a lunchbox safely is important to keep the food enjoyable and safe to eat. Food poisoning bacteria grow in warm conditions between **5°C and 60°C**. This is known as the **Temperature Danger Zone**. It is important to keep high risk food out of this zone by keeping it cool and securely packed when transporting food



Tips for “packing it safe”

- Always include an ice brick
- Ensure that food and drinks packed in to the lunchbox are cold first – this way the food and drink will stay cold longer. Use frozen bread slices or rolls (cut in half before freezing) to make sandwiches or make the sandwiches/rolls the night before and freeze
- A cold/frozen drink bottle is a great idea however once the child has consumed the drink it will no longer keep the food cold
- In warm weather, freeze 1/4 to 1/3 bottle of water. Top up with cold water before packing. This way your child will have cool water to drink all day. Frozen drinks may not unfreeze by lunchtime unless it is particularly hot
- Keep the lunch items in the fridge until just before leaving home then, place them in the lunchbox with a freezer brick to ensure they are kept cold
- Once home, throw out any perishable food or drink not consumed
- Clean the lunchbox, containers and drink bottles in warm soapy water after each use

Choosing a lunchbox

Select a lunchbox that:

- Is sturdy, so the food won't be squashed
- Is easy to open and insulated if possible
- Allows easy access to lunchbox foods as plastic wrap and packages can be tricky for young children

TIPS

- Packing each food item into a separate sealed container or wrapper before packing in the lunchbox ensures it will stay appetising and prevent cross contamination
- Involve your child in the selection of their own lunchbox or choose a lunchbox which you think will appeal to your child (e.g. their favourite colour or cartoon character)

Taking special care with high risk foods

Certain types of food provide a particularly good environment for the growth of food-poisoning bacteria.

These 'high risk foods' should be kept out of the temperature danger zone. They include:

- Meat
- Poultry (chicken, turkey etc.)
- Milk and other dairy products or alternatives e.g. soy milk
- Eggs
- Smallgoods e.g. ham, salami, devon
- Fish and Seafood
- Cooked rice and pasta
- Food that comes in packages, jars and cans can also become high risk after opening

Choosing less risky food

Most food can be packed in a lunchbox successfully with the right containers and wrapping, however food can still spoil. Care should be taken to select food which is least likely to be within the temperature danger zone whilst stored in the lunchbox. These include:

- Dry foods. E.g. baked goods, bread, cereal, dried fruit and wholegrain crackers
- Pre-packaged foods e.g. cereal bars, dried fruit
- Fruits and vegetables which are cut up and placed in sturdy, sealed container

**Food Foundations recommend reading the nutritional information panel of dry foods and pre-packaged foods carefully before giving them to your children. If you have any questions please refer to the _____*

Remember that lunchboxes can be tumbled around inside bags causing delicate food to be damaged. As a result, children can miss out on important food if their lunch is too bruised or crumbled to be eaten. Take care when packing:

- **Fruit & vegetables:** These may be best cut up and placed in sturdy sealed container.
- **Sandwiches:** Wrap these carefully so that the bread and fillings stay together and make sure the sandwich won't be squashed by a heavier food in the lunchbox.
- **Baked goods:** Try wrapping them in plastic wrap and then sealing them in a separate compartment or in their own small container. Keep away from drinks
- **Dairy foods:** Wrap a plastic freezer bag around yoghurts and dairy snacks prior to placing in the lunchbox. Keep away from heavy drink bottles