

Food Safety Information

LUNCH BOX RULES

Food left in school bags in warm classrooms or next to radiators is an ideal breeding ground for the bacteria that cause food poisoning. Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of food poisoning, so it is essential to take care when preparing their food. Packed lunches are often prepared many hours in advance and kept at temperatures way above the ideal, allowing bacteria to thrive. Follow this advice to help prevent food poisoning.

Preparation

- Wash and dry your hands first. Cover any cuts with a waterproof plaster.
- Clean and disinfect preparation surfaces with an anti-bacterial spray that is suitable for use in kitchens.
- Check that all food to be used is within its 'use by' or 'best before' date.
- Wash salad ingredients thoroughly under cold running water.
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate at all times.
- Use different chopping boards and utensils for cooked and raw foods. Clean the chopping board with anti-bacterial spray in between preparation of different foods.
- All meat must be cooked thoroughly to kill bacteria. The juices must run clear and there should be no pink bits inside.
- Cool pre-cooked foods within 1½ hours and keep in the fridge until required. Don't put hot food in the fridge.
- When using eggs, they must be hard-boiled (at least 10 minutes).
- Ideally, make sandwiches fresh in the morning. If making them the night before, then keep in the fridge. Wrap them with greaseproof paper or foil, and put in a plastic sandwich box.

Storage

- Keep food as cool as possible to prevent bacteria from growing.
- The best way to keep food cool is to use an insulated bag and an ice pack. Cold air sinks, so place the ice pack on top of the food.
- If you don't have an ice pack, you could freeze a small carton of fruit juice/plastic bottle of squash (not fizzy drink).
- Pack any snacks for breaks separately from lunch times, to prevent the lunch pack from being opened too often.
- If you can't make the lunch box cold, avoid using high-risk foods such as cooked meats, soft cheese, fish and egg. Use fillings such as cheese spread, Marmite, jam or peanut butter instead.
- As well as sandwiches containing high-risk fillings, dairy products such as yoghurts and fromage frais must be kept refrigerated.

Further advice can be obtained from the Food Safety Team at the council on 01273 292161.

