Lunchbox food safety
Packing your child’s lunchbox safely is important to keep the food enjoyable and to prevent illness. The bacteria that cause food poisoning grow in warm conditions, between 5°C and 60°C. This is known as the **temperature danger zone**. It is important to keep the food out of this zone by keeping it cool.

**Choosing a lunchbox**
- Select a lunchbox that is:
  - sturdy, so the food won’t be squashed
  - easy to open
  - insulated if possible.
- Use a re-usable/washable container for less environmental waste.
- Pack items with resealable containers.
- Involve your child in the selection of their own lunchbox or choose a lunchbox which you think will appeal to your child.

**Tips for packing it safe**
- Pack food items into separate containers and wrappers before putting in the lunchbox. This ensures it will stay appetising and prevent cross-contamination.
- A cold/frozen drink bottle is a great idea. However once your child has consumed the drink, it will no longer keep the food cold. Using an ice brick as well can be a good idea.
- Ensure food and drinks are cold before placing in the lunchbox. Use frozen bread slices or rolls (cut in half before freezing) to make sandwiches or make the sandwiches/rolls the night before and freeze.
- Keep lunch items in the fridge until your child leaves for school.
- Once home from school throw out any perishable food or drinks not consumed.
- Clean lunchbox, containers and drink bottles in warm soapy water and rinse well after each use.

**Taking special care with high risk foods**
Certain types of food make it easy for the bacteria that cause food poisoning to grow. Keep foods out of the temperature danger zone (5°C to 60°C) and apply extra caution with these ‘high risk’ foods:

- meat
- poultry (e.g. chicken, turkey)
- milk and dairy products
- smallgoods (e.g. ham)
- fish and seafood
- eggs.
Other practical tips for preparing healthy and safe lunchboxes

Lunchboxes are tumbled around inside school bags which may cause delicate food to become damaged. As a result, children can miss out on important food if their lunch is too bruised or crumbled to be eaten. Here are some tips on how best to pack your child’s lunchbox.

- **Fruit and vegetables** – these may be best cut up and placed in rigid, sealed containers.
- **Foods that crumble easily (e.g. crackers)** – store in a rigid container.
- **Sandwiches** – wrap these carefully so that the bread and fillings stay together. Make sure the sandwich won’t be squashed by a heavier food in the lunchbox. It helps if the food fits snugly in the box so it can’t be tumbled around.
- **Baked goods** – try wrapping these in plastic wrap and then sealing in a separate compartment or in their own small container. Keep away from drinks.
- **Dairy foods** – wrap a plastic freezer bag or paper towel around yoghurts and dairy snacks prior to placing in the lunchbox. Keep away from heavy drink bottles.

*Use these tips to help your child enjoy a healthy safe lunch*

For more information, including these helpful fact sheets, visit:


- Fact Sheet 1: Cooling and reheating hazardous foods
- Fact Sheet 29: Lunchbox safety