



NourishNet

A FOOD RECOVERY TOOLBOX



On-the-Go Meals



Reasons to Pack On-the-Go Meals

- Packing on-the-go meals is a great way use leftovers, save money, and eat healthier.
- Packing on-the-go meals is also a great way to accommodate dietary needs, allergies, and food preferences.
- Packing your own food is less wasteful and expensive than buying restaurant meals.

The Importance of Food Safety

It is often not possible to keep pre-packed meals refrigerated, leading to safety concerns. Here are tips to reduce your risk of food-borne illness:

- Always wash hands and use clean utensils and cutting boards when preparing food.
- The best way to keep a packed meal safe is to start with safe food, keep cold food cold, and keep hot food hot.
- Bacteria in food grows fastest at room temperature or slightly warmer, a range known as the Danger Zone (40° - 140° F). Store on-the-go meals in the fridge until you are ready to leave, keeping them cold as long as possible.
- Reheat any foods that should be eaten hot in a microwave to at least 165° F (steaming hot). To ensure even heating, cover food and stir halfway through heating.
- If refrigeration is unavailable, shelf-stable food is the safest option.
- Choose non-perishable foods if refrigeration or insulated containers are not available. Good choices are whole or dried fruits and vegetables, hard cheeses, canned meat or fish, bread, crackers, dry cereal, peanut butter, and pickles.

How to Safely Pack On-the-Go Meals

- Reusable containers are a sustainable choice and can help you save money over time.
- Keeping foods separate helps preserve flavors. If available, multi-compartment containers are convenient and encourage packing a variety of food groups.
- Disposable packaging should be discarded or reused for a non-food purpose. The materials in disposable packaging could degrade over time and harbor bacteria.

HOT FOODS

Use insulated containers with tight fitting lids, such as a thermos. Containers should be made of food-safe materials, like metal or BPA-free plastic.

Pre-heat the container by filling with boiling water before refilling with your hot food. Be sure to keep the lid closed until mealtime.

COLD FOODS

Use an insulated lunch box or bag, and cold sources, such as an ice pack or frozen water bottle. Some foods, like yogurt, applesauce, or juice boxes, can be packed frozen and will be ready to eat after a couple hours.

If an insulated box/bag is unavailable, double-layer paper bags and store your meal in the fridge (if possible) for extra protection.



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When Dining Out

- Try to dine out for lunch instead of dinner when many restaurants offer smaller portions and lower prices.
- Instead of spending money on sodas or sweetened drinks, ask for a glass of water and get your calories from a wholesome meal.