



Food safety in lunch boxes

In most cases, food is stored in lunch boxes for several hours, so the lunch box needs to stay cool. Food safety suggestions include:

- Choose an insulated lunch box or one with a freezer pack, or include a wrapped frozen water bottle to keep the lunch box cool.
- Follow hygienic food preparation methods. This is especially important when food will be stored in the lunch box for many hours before eating.
- Prepare lunches the night before and store in the fridge or freezer.
- Perishable foods such as dairy products, eggs and sliced meats should be kept cool and eaten within about four hours of preparation. Don't pack these foods if just cooked. First cool in the refrigerator overnight.

Peer pressure

Food advertising and their friends' food choices will influence children. Remember that not all children go to school with lunch boxes filled with chips and lollies, despite what your children think and say. It is important to keep offering healthy lunch box choices in a variety of ways, as children learn to eat what is familiar to them. Remember that it may take time to change your child's food preferences to more healthy choices.

Severe food allergy

If your child has a severe food allergy, it is important to develop a management plan with your family doctor, the school, teacher and class. The school or early childhood setting will notify other parents or carers if certain food or drinks need to be kept away from children and limited in the lunch box. Some schools have a nut-free policy and fillings like peanut butter are not allowed.

Things to remember

- It is important to keep offering healthy lunch box choices in a variety of ways, as children learn to eat what is familiar to them.
- Encourage your child to sit and eat before heading out to play, or talk to your school about making sure all children get a chance to eat enough before play starts.
- Include fruit and vegetables in your child's lunch box.
- Foods such as sandwiches can be prepared the night before or on the weekend, frozen, then taken for each day's lunch box.

