

Food Safety for Children – it's in your hands

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Australian Food Safety Week 14-21 November 2020

Food safety – it's in your hands

For more information visit
www.foodsafety.asn.au



Food Safety for the health of Australian Children

As Australia starts heating up towards Summer, it's an important time for Families & Childcare Centres to focus on essential Food Safety measures to avoid food poisoning.

This article focuses on three aspects of our everyday lives that are especially important for those caring for children:

- Temperature Danger Zone
- Safe Lunchboxes
- Grocery Shopping

Australian Food Safety Week

14 to 21 November

The theme is:

'Food Safety – it's in your hands'

The Food Safety Information Council will be building upon consumer behaviour established during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to continue to reduce the amount of foodborne disease.

0 to 2 hours

Use immediately, or keep at or below 5°C, or at or above 60°C

2 to 4 hours

Use immediately

More than 4 hours

Throw away

1. Temperature Danger Zone

Keep your fridge below 5°C. At these temperatures most food poisoning bacteria stop growing or they grow slowly. Use a fridge thermometer to check that the temperature stays around 4 to 5°C. Also make sure you have enough fridge space as fridges won't work properly when they are overloaded or when food is packed tightly because the cold air cannot circulate.

If you are running out of room in your fridge, remove foods that are not potentially hazardous, such as jams, pickles, vinegar-based dressings, bottled or canned drinks. The temperature of these foods is not critical for safety and they can be kept cool in insulated containers with ice or cold packs.

Freshly cooked food, not for immediate consumption, should be cooled to below the danger zone as quickly as possible. Divide food into small shallow containers and place in the fridge or freezer as soon as it stops steaming.

Use the two-hour/four-hour guide above to work out what action you should take to avoid food poisoning if potentially hazardous food is held at temperatures in the danger zone.

2. Safe Lunchboxes

We need to transport food to school safely to ensure our kids don't become one of the estimated 4.1 million cases of food poisoning in Australia each year.

Bacteria can grow quickly in some foods, like cooked poultry and other meats, dairy products and sandwich fillings, so it is important to keep their lunchbox cool.

At school your child's lunchbox will stay cool until lunchtime if kept in their school bag with a frozen drink or freezer block inside the lunchbox.



Follow these 5 simple lunchbox food safety tips:

- When buying lunchboxes choose ones that have room for a frozen drink or freezer block and are easy to clean and dry.
- Always wash and dry your hands thoroughly before preparing food.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables thoroughly.
- Make sure lunchbox foods are always well separated from other foods in the refrigerator, particularly raw meats, chicken and fish.
- Keep the lunch cool in the fridge until you are about to leave home.

5 ways to avoid becoming one of more than 4.1 million cases of food poisoning each year

1. CLEAN



Wash hands with soap and running water before handling food, wash the dishes regularly and keep the kitchen clean.

2. CHILL



Keep the fridge at 5°C or below and clean it out regularly, refrigerate any leftovers as soon as they've stopped steaming and use or freeze them within 3 days.

3. SEPARATE



Prevent cross contamination especially between raw meat or poultry and other foods that won't be cooked like salads.

4. COOK



Cook poultry or minced products to 75°C in the centre, be aware of the risk of raw or minimally cooked egg dishes.

5. DON'T COOK FOR OTHERS IF YOU HAVE GASTRO



You could make them sick too so ask someone else to cook or get a takeaway.



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3. Grocery Shopping

Strict food safety standards apply to food retailers in Australia to ensure that the food you buy is safe.

There are some signs you can look for to ensure you buy a **safe product**.

Once you buy the food, it's up to you to make sure that it stays safe including **not leaving shopping in a hot car**.

Shop for **non-perishable food first** – leave the chilled and frozen food until last.

Keep **hot foods separated** from frozen and chilled products while shopping and during transport home.

If a product is labelled as '**keep refrigerated**' or 'keep chilled' and is not in chilled storage, don't buy it and alert the store manager.

Plan to do your **food shopping last** and take it straight home so perishable food is allowed to warm to temperatures in the danger zone (5° to 60°C) for as little time as possible.

Chilled and frozen foods are best taken home in bags or boxes with insulation added **to keep food cool** and an ice brick can be included especially if you travel a long distance or expect a delay.

Keep **raw meat, poultry or seafood separate** from cooked and ready to eat foods. Ask the check-out operator to pack them in a separate, leak-proof bag (they can be packed in the same bag) and encourage them to pack chilled and frozen items together by placing these items together on the conveyor belt and by providing an insulated bag or cooler.



When home, pack **chilled and frozen** products into your refrigerator or freezer immediately.

If you receive **home food deliveries** make sure you are there to receive them and you put chilled and frozen products straight into the refrigerator or freezer. Alternatively arrange for these foods to be placed in a cooler with ice bricks in a shaded place that will keep your delivered food chilled until you arrive home.

If you get home and then find some evidence of tampering or package damage that you didn't notice when buying it or expect for online purchases, **return the product** to the store or call the manufacturer.

Check labels for specific storage conditions to ensure safety and quality. Don't assume that you know how to store food as recipes change and modern food products like jams or sauces may have less salt or sugar than in the past and may need refrigeration.

Do you need further Food Safety information?

This article was written by Sarah Friedrich, OSCAR Care Group Food Safety Auditor & Trainer. Please call or email Sarah via our contact details below.



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