

# Food from Home: Visitors providing food to patients

## Food from home can be brought in for patients as long as

- It has been cooked and transported in a safe manner
- It is appropriate for the patient/residents medical condition and swallowing needs
- Food is eaten on the same day it is brought into the ward

It is important you speak to the ward nurse, dietitian or speech pathologist before bringing any foods in for a patient or resident. Food from home may not always be suitable due to a person's medical condition, increased risk of infection or swallowing problems.

## Food that is safe to bring in for patients

These are foods which are stored at room temperature or on the supermarket shelf including:



- Dry or sweet biscuits
- Breakfast cereals
- Fresh whole fruit and dried fruit
- Bread, bagels, muffins, plain cakes and scones
- Pre-packaged drinks – juice, soft drink, bottled water

## Food that needs extra care when being brought in for patients

These foods need refrigeration, including:



- Pre-cooked meals: including rice and pasta dishes, meat, fish, casseroles and soups
- Dairy products – milk, yoghurt, cheese
- Cut up fruit and vegetables e.g. coleslaw, potato salad, and fruit salad.
- Sweet dishes and cakes which contain custard or cream
- Sandwiches
- Salami, deli meats and pâtés
- Home prepared fruit and vegetable juices

## Food that is NOT ALLOWED to be given to patients



- Raw meat, raw eggs
- Raw fish or shellfish - including sushi containing raw fish
- Unpasteurised dairy products
- Any food that has been left out of the refrigerator for longer than 2 hours

**WE CANNOT ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SAFETY OF FOOD PREPARED OUTSIDE OF THE HOSPITAL AND PROVIDED TO PATIENTS.**

Our menu provides a range of hot and cold food and drinks every day. The meals served to patients are prepared to offer a safe, healthy and balanced diet. When someone is eating little or has a poor appetite, food brought into hospital for patients by family can be important source of nutrition.

## **REMEMBER IT IS IMPORTANT TO CHECK IF THE FOOD IS SUITABLE FOR THE PATIENT'S MEDICAL CONDITION BEFORE YOU BRING IT INTO THE HOSPITAL**

Due to swallowing difficulties, some patients require modified food and thickened drinks. It is essential that food and drink brought in from home also complies with any recommendations to avoid choking. The speech pathologists and dietitians can provide additional information on foods that are suitable for these patients.

This information is to help you understand the steps in reducing the risk of food poisoning for our patients.

### **What is Food Poisoning?**

Food Poisoning is caused by bacteria from food that has been poorly handled, stored or cooked. Signs of food poisoning may include nausea, vomiting, stomach cramps, diarrhoea, fever and headache.

People who are unwell and in hospital have a reduced immune system. This means they have an increased risk of food poisoning or they may experience more severe symptoms compared to healthy people.

Bacteria will grow and multiply in some types of foods more easily than in others. Any ready-to-eat foods can turn nasty if not kept in the fridge. The level of bacteria can increase quickly in foods during the time it is at room temperature. Carrying food to the hospital increases the time it is out of the fridge. This makes it more dangerous than when you eat the same food at home.

### **General Food Safety Guidelines**

- Always wash your hands prior to preparing food at home and handling food on the ward
- Food should be freshly prepared within 24 hours of bringing it to the ward
- Food should be stored and carried in clean, sealed containers
- Any food must be kept refrigerated after preparation until it is heated for eating
- Foods should be transported COLD and carried in an insulated cooler or with an ice pack to maintain a low temperature
- If food is bought to the ward HOT, it must be eaten immediately. It cannot be reheated or refrigerated on the ward
- Use a 'thermos' flask to transport HOT foods. Make sure that it has been preheated with boiling water before being filled with the steaming hot food
- Uninsulated hot food should not be transported long distances (greater than 30 minutes), as it will increase the risk of food poisoning
- If reheating cold food, ensure it is steaming and stir food half way through so that it reheats evenly
- **Please do not offer to share food with other patients**

## Other Information

- Access to fridges and microwaves is limited on many wards. Please check with the ward staff to find out what equipment is available on the ward
- It is recommended that you also provide cutlery if required
- Hospital staff are **not** expected to heat food, serve or feed patients food provided from outside the hospital. This is the role of the person providing the food
- You will need to record the food you have prepared at home in a ward logbook. Please check with the ward clerk or nursing staff where this is kept
- If food is being stored in a fridge on the ward, it must be labelled with the patient's name, hospital (UR) number and date of preparation
- All food provided to patients from outside the hospital **must** be eaten on the same day it is brought to the ward
- Ward fridges will be cleared daily and any food that has been stored for more than one day will be thrown out. This also includes the container
- Only foods for patients can be stored and reheated in ward facilities

## Any Questions?

Please speak to the nursing staff if you have any concerns about the information in this brochure, the patient's or resident's diet, cultural / religious requirements or nutritional needs.

## To find out more about Food Safety:

The Victorian Department of Human Services: [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

Food Safety Victoria: [www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety)

Food Safety Hotline: phone 1300 364 352 or email [foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:foodsafety@health.vic.gov.au)

<http://www.foodsafety.asn.au/resources/aged-care-facilities-and-food-safety-when-taking-food-for-residents/>

## Contact

Nutrition and Dietetics Department

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