

# Packing a safe lunch

Families get sick from meals made at home more often than you think. To minimize the risk of food-borne illness follow the simple food safety steps of clean, separate, cook and chill when preparing and packing lunches.

## **Clean: wash hands and surfaces often; wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly**

Bacteria can easily spread throughout the kitchen. Before and after preparing each type of food, wash hands, cutting boards, knives and countertops with warm soapy water.

- Ensure that food placed into the lunch bag has been properly cleaned. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables under cool running water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten
- Store food inside the lunch bag in food-grade containers and/or wraps to minimize potential contamination

### **Lunch bag tips**

- Ensure that lunch bags/containers are maintained in a sanitary manner and in good repair
- Wash out the interior portion of the lunch bag that may come into contact with food, every day and rinse thoroughly with water to remove soap residue. The container should be allowed to thoroughly air dry. Follow the manufacturer's directions
- Consider replacing the lunch bag if it is badly torn, exposing the insulation, and/or can no longer be properly cleaned
- Thoroughly wash re-useable drinking bottles every day

## **Separate: don't cross-contaminate**

Cross-contamination is how harmful bacteria spread. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and their juices separate from foods that are cooked or ready-to-eat.

### **Lunch bag tips**

- If packed lunches are stored in the fridge for later use, ensure they are stored above and well away from any raw meats

## **Cook: cook food to a safe internal temperature**

Improper cooking of food could mean that harmful bacteria survive and make you sick. Food is safely cooked when it reaches a high enough internal temperature to kill the harmful bacteria.

(See "Safe Cooking Temperatures" chart on reverse side)

- Use a probe thermometer to check the internal temperature of food. This is the only way to tell if the food has reached the proper final cooking temperature. You can't tell if food is cooked safely by how it looks

### **Lunch bag tips**

- Keep cooked food that is to be held hot for lunch, at temperatures at 60°C (140°F) or higher. Use a properly insulated thermal container. Follow the manufacturer's directions
- Never allow food to sit at temperatures in the Danger Zone [the temperature range between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F)]
- If leftovers are being reheated for lunch, ensure they are heated to an internal temperature of 74°C (165°F) or higher. Bring soups to a full, rolling boil and stir during the reheating process

## **Chill: refrigerate promptly, cool foods quickly**

Bacteria multiply fastest at the temperatures between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F), so chilling food properly is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of illness.

- Store perishable foods (such as meats and dairy products) that require cold holding in the refrigerator or freezer as soon as you get home from purchasing them
- Store leftovers quickly. Leftovers intended for lunches should be used within two days of having been originally prepared

### **Lunch bag tips**

- Keep food out of the Danger Zone. Use ample ice packs to ensure that food is kept cold. Ensure that food being stored cold is maintained at or below 4°C (40°F)
- Keep sandwiches made ahead of time, in the refrigerator until you are ready to pack the lunch
- Discard leftover perishable food that has remained in the lunch bag for more than two hours, if it has not been stored at temperatures at or below 4°C (40°F) or at or above 60°C (140°F)

## SAFE COOKING TEMPERATURES

<b>Ground Meat and Mixtures</b>	
Ground beef, pork, veal, lamb	71°C (160°F)
Ground turkey, chicken	74°C (165°F)
<b>Fresh Beef, Veal, Lamb</b>	
Beef, lamb and veal and steaks	Medium Rare 63°C (145°F)
	Medium 71°C (160°F)
	Well Done 77°C (170°F)
<b>Poultry</b>	
Chicken and Turkey, whole	85°C (185°F)
Poultry parts	74°C (165°F)
Duck and Goose	74°C (165°F)
Stuffing (cooked alone or in bird)	74°C (165°F)
<b>Fresh Pork</b>	
Medium	71°C (160°F)
<b>Ham</b>	
Fresh (raw)	71°C (160°F)
Pre-cooked (to reheat)	74°C (165°F)
<b>Eggs and Egg Dishes</b>	
Egg dishes and casseroles	74 °C (165 °F)
<b>Seafood</b>	
Fin fish	70°C (158°F)
Shrimp, Lobster and Crabs	74°C (165°F)
Clams, Oysters and Mussels	Shells open during cooking time
<b>Leftovers and Casseroles</b>	
All left over foods	74°C (165°F)

Symptoms of food-borne illness include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach cramps, headache and fever. People who think they are experiencing food-borne illness should seek medical attention.

For more information on food safety at home or any other public health related program, please contact York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653/ TTY 1-866-252-9933.

For more information on The Regional Municipality of York, please visit [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca)