

LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

Food Safety Tips



‘We don’t heat lunches at our early childhood setting, parents are bringing hot food in a thermos for their children. Is this safe?’

High risk food such as meat, poultry, eggs and cooked rice/pasta must be held below 5°C in the fridge or above 60°C to ensure it is kept out of the temperature danger zone and remains safe.

Encourage parents to test their thermos by putting food in it as hot as possible. Leave it for 6 hours and if it is still steaming hot (above 60°C) after that time it is insulating well and will keep food safe. It is best practice to use a probe thermometer to test that food is above 60°C before serving to children. If food is below 60°C it is unsafe for consumption and parents must be notified that their thermos is not holding food at a safe temperature.

Encourage parents to preheat the thermos with boiling water for about 5 minutes before adding the food as hot as possible.

Are cooler bags/insulated lunchboxes safe to store in the fridge?

It is **not** safe to put **closed** cooler bags/insulated lunchboxes straight into the fridge at your early childhood setting. The reason being, if the cooler bag or lunchbox is closed, the cool air from the fridge is not able to penetrate the bag/box, leaving the food inside at potentially unsafe temperatures.

Some good solutions to this problem include:

- All perishable foods (or all food if space is available) be placed into brown paper bags or boxes labelled with the child’s name and placed in the fridge. Food not requiring refrigeration could be left in the cooler bag/insulated lunchbox (outside of the fridge) if space is at a premium
- Place morning tea in an esky with ice-bricks and place only lunches the fridge. This would only be appropriate if potentially hazardous foods were saved for lunchtime only
- If space is not an issue then cooler bags/insulated lunchboxes can be stored in the fridge but only if the following practices are followed: 1) Parents and staff need to ensure that they are placed straight into the fridge on arrival and 2) **the lid is unzipped and left open** to allow for cool air to flow inside.

Whichever solution your early childhood setting decides to choose you will need to ensure it is written into your Nutrition and Food Handling policy and effectively promoted to staff and parents.