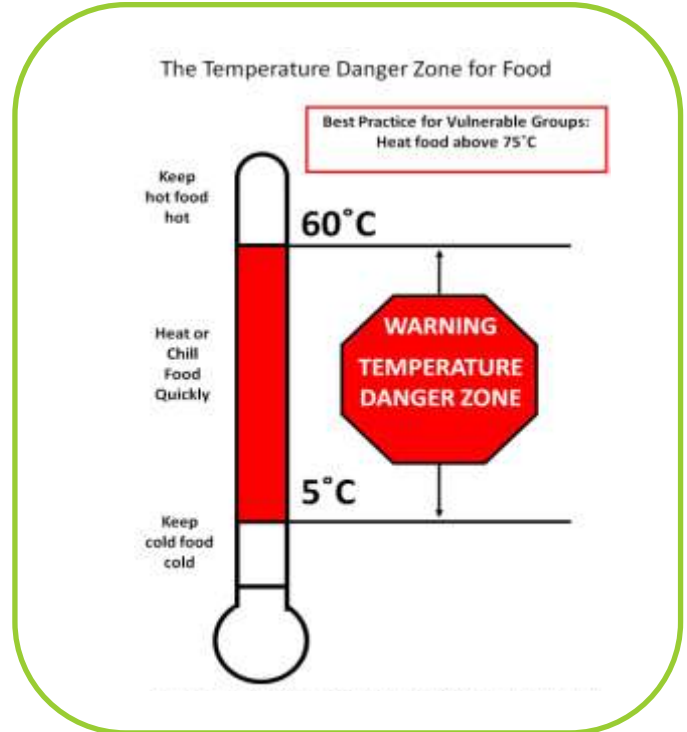


The importance of lunchbox food safety

When packing your child's lunchbox safely is important to keep the food enjoyable and to prevent illness. The bacteria that cause food poisoning grow in warm conditions, between 5°C and 60°C. This is known as the **Temperature Danger Zone**. It is essential to keep the food out of this zone by keeping it cool.

Choosing a lunchbox

- Select a lunchbox that is:
 - sturdy, so the food won't be squashed
 - easy to open
 - insulated if possible.
- Use a reusable/washable container for less environmental waste.
- Pack items in resealable containers.
- Involve your child in the selection of their own lunchbox or choose a lunchbox which you think will appeal to your child.



Tips for packing it safe

- Pack food items into separate containers and wrappers before putting in the lunchbox. This will help food stay appetising and prevent cross contamination.
- A cold/frozen drink bottle is a great idea. However once your child has consumed the drink, it will no longer keep the food cold. Using an ice brick as well will assist.
- Ensure food and drinks are cold before placing them in the lunchbox. Use frozen bread slices or rolls (cut in half before freezing) to make sandwiches or make the sandwiches/rolls the night before and freeze.
- Keep lunch items in the fridge until your child leaves for school.
- Once home from school throw out any perishable food or drink not consumed.
- Clean lunch box, containers and drink bottles in warm soapy water and rinse well after each use.



Keeping Lunch Safe at School

Food Smart Schools • an naq nutrition program

For more information visit www.naqlid.org or email info@foodsmartschools.org

Taking special care with high risk foods

Certain types of food make it easy for the bacteria that cause food poisoning to grow. These 'high risk foods' should be kept out of the temperature danger zone (5°C to 60°C). They include:

- Meat
- Poultry (e.g. chicken, turkey)
- Milk and dairy products
- Eggs
- Small goods (e.g. ham)
- Fish and seafood
- Food that comes in packages, jars and cans can also become high risk after opening

Choosing less risky foods

These include:

- **Dry foods:** e.g. bread, cereal, popcorn, dried fruit and wholegrain cracker biscuits.
- **Fresh foods:** e.g. fruits and vegetables cut up and placed in sturdy, sealed containers.

Other practical tips

Lunchboxes are tumbled around inside school bags which may cause delicate food to become damaged. As a result, children can miss out on important food, if their lunch is too bruised or crumbled to be eaten. Take care when packing:

- **Fruit and vegetables** - these may be best cut up and placed in sturdy, sealed containers.
- **Foods that crumble easily (e.g. crackers)** – store in a sturdy container.
- **Sandwiches** - wrap these carefully so that the bread and fillings stay together and make sure the sandwich won't be squashed by a heavier food in the lunch box. It helps if the food fits snugly in the box so it can't be tumbled around.
- **Home-made baked goods** - try placing in their own small container. Keep away from drinks.
- **Dairy foods** - wrap a paper towel around yoghurts and dairy snacks to absorb condensation prior to placing in the lunchbox. Keep away from heavy drink bottles.



For more information, including these helpful fact sheets visit:

www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/

- Fact Sheet: Helping your children learn about food safety
- Fact Sheet: Food safety at home
- Fact Sheet: How to prevent the growth of bacteria in foods
- Fact Sheet: How to be 'food safe' when buying foods