

Packed lunches and teas

The Food Standards Agency advises that after cooking, food should not remain at room temperature for more than 2 hours. After this time, the food should either be refrigerated or frozen and can be reheated later. Bacteria that can cause food poisoning will grow at temperatures above 8°C and below 63°C so it is important to ensure the product stays out of this 'danger zone'. Therefore, We would advise the parents to avoid packing highly perishable foods such as meat and fish in sandwiches, and choose safer fillings such as hard or processed cheese and salads that don't need to be kept in the fridge (or where the manufacturers suggest refrigeration after opening) are OK to use if the sandwiches cannot be kept cool.

Some foods don't need refrigeration and can be safely packed:

Cookies, crackers, and muffins
Breads and bread products such as bagels and fruit breads
Dry ready-to-eat cereals, pretzels, popcorn
Fresh fruits and vegetables
Dried fruits such as raisins and apples
Canned and bottled fruit juices
Hard cheese
Jam and honey
Unopened cans of fruit or pudding

Some ways to keep packed lunches cold:

- Commercial gel packs
- water frozen in a rigid, leak proof plastic container
- ice cubes in a leak proof container
- a frozen juice carton - place the juice carton in the freezer, and use the frozen carton in the lunch box to keep the other foods cool. The carton will have defrosted by lunchtime

<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/multimedia/pdfs/pdf-ni/safe-catering.pdf>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/childhealth6-15/Pages/Lighterlunchboxes.aspx>