The preparation and storage of packed lunches prior to consumption can pose a number of food safety problems.

Peak periods for food poisoning occur during the warm summer months, so extra care is needed during this time.

At room temperature harmful bacteria can multiply rapidly if they are present in food.

Foods high in protein such as boiled egg and cooked meats are often used in sandwiches and can be perfect breeding grounds for bacteria if they are kept moist and warm at room temperature.

If foods have been handled frequently before they are eaten, they are more likely to have been contaminated with bacteria.

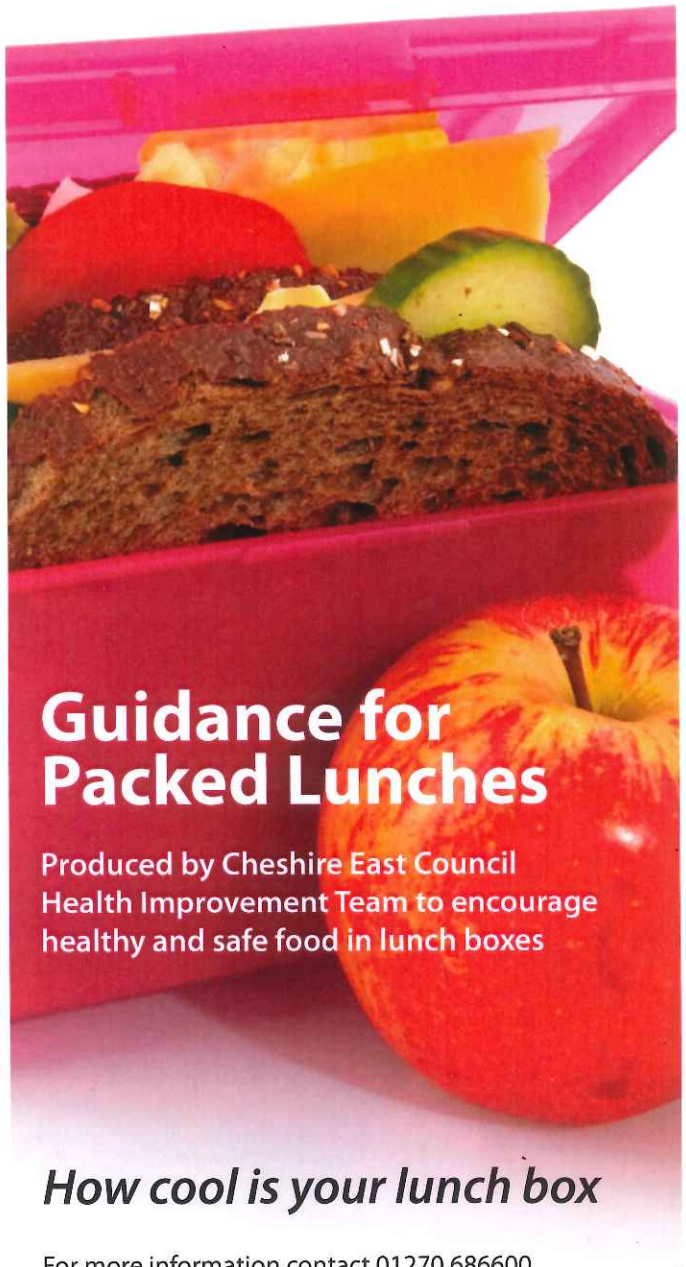
Small ice packs are available which fit inside sandwich boxes. These can be frozen overnight and then put in the lunch box to keep the food cool until it is eaten at lunchtime. Bacteria on food multiply more slowly in colder temperatures than at room temperature.



Food safety and hygiene

Handy hints for preparing packed lunches

- Wash your hands before you prepare food and after handling raw meats.
- Check that pre-packed sandwich fillings are not "out of date".
- Store chilled foods in the refrigerator after purchase.
- Cooked meats, fish and eggs are high-risk products and should be refrigerated.
- Chopping boards and utensils need to be cleaned thoroughly after being used for raw meats. Use hot, soapy water to wash equipment.
- Fruit, vegetables and salads should be washed thoroughly in clean, cold, running water before they are eaten.
- Ensure that materials used for wrapping food are suitable. For example, food quality cling film, sandwich bags or aluminium foil.
- If sandwiches are prepared the night before, they must be stored in the refrigerator overnight.
- Put a frozen ice pack in the lunch box each morning to keep the food cool until lunchtime!
- Lunch boxes and equipment must be washed after each use.



Guidance for Packed Lunches

Produced by Cheshire East Council Health Improvement Team to encourage healthy and safe food in lunch boxes

How cool is your lunch box

For more information contact 01270 686600

Cheshire East Council

www.cheshireeast.gov.uk

The Balance of Good Health

Food provides nutrients that help the body work properly. No single food contains nutrients in the amounts needed, so a mixture of foods has to be eaten.

The Balance of Good Health is now based on the Food Standards Agency "eatwell plate" which is divided into 5 portions:

- Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods (yellow area)
- Fruit & vegetables (green area)
- Milk & dairy foods (blue area)
- Meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein (pink area)
- Foods and drinks high in fat and/or sugar (purple area)

The eatwell plate shows the types & proportions of food needed to make a wellbalanced and healthy diet.

It shows that people do not have to give up the foods they most enjoy for the sake of their health - just eat some foods in smaller quantities or less frequently!

Variety and a change towards more vegetables, fruit, bread, breakfast cereals, potatoes, rice and pasta are what matters. Snacks as well as meals count towards a healthy balance.



How cool is your lunch box

Examples of some of the foods that could be included in your lunch boxes are below:

Bread, rice, potatoes, pasta
Examples include bread, pitta bread, tortilla wrap, pasta, rice, potatoes and other cereals.

Fruit & vegetables
Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit & vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juice) a day. Examples include tomatoes, grapes, peach, cucumber, orange, carrot, apple and banana.

Meat, fish, eggs, beans
Examples include cooked turkey, ham, boiled egg, fish (tuna, sardines, prawn), nuts and beans.

Milk & dairy foods
Examples include yoghurt, cheese, milk and fromage frais. Try reduced fat varieties or full fat versions in smaller amounts or less often.

Food & drink high in fats and/or sugars
Examples include cake, biscuit, pastries, crisps, puddings, chocolate, low fat spread and mayonnaise.

Water
Try to drink 6-8 glasses of drinking water each day. Drink water at lunchtime instead of sugary drinks.

