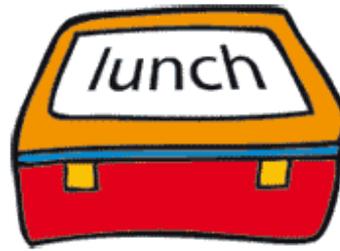


Is your lunch



box safe?

By Lucie Hogg 8CM

The preparation and storage of packed lunches before eating them can create 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 in shops 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 preparing 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- Check that pre-packed sandwich fillings are not "out of date".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 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; 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.