



Recommendations for Preparing Food at Home for Patients in Hospital

Each year millions of people get sick from food borne illnesses that can cause serious health problems especially in people with weakened immune systems. Bringing food from home may put patients at risk for potential food borne illness. If home prepared food is required, please follow the guidelines below to reduce the risk of illness:

Safe Food Practice Recommendations:

- Transport food from grocery store to home and into the refrigerator as soon as possible. Note: Your fridge should be below 4C/40F.
- Follow the 2-Hour Rule: The total time food should be at room temperature from purchase, preparation and transportation must be less than 2 hours.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs away from other foods. Do this in your shopping cart, bags, and fridge.
- Do not leave high risk foods such as meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, and sandwiches made with fillings out of the refrigerator for more than 30 minutes. This includes travel time to the hospital. Use an ice pack when transporting cooled food to the hospital.
- Do not bring in home-canned foods, unpasteurised milk, raw sprouts, meat spreads, and previously heated foods as they are considered high risk.
- Pay close attention to expiration date of products and do not use expired products.
- The person preparing food should not prepare food for others if they are sick.

Food Preparation and Cooking Guidelines

- During preparation, rinse fruits and vegetables thoroughly before use.
- Always wash your food, hands, counters, and cooking tools, wash hands in warm soapy water for at least 20 seconds. Do this before and after touching food.
- Thaw food in the fridge or in the microwave, never thaw food by simply taking it out of the fridge and leaving it on a countertop. Immediately cook foods thawed in microwave.
- Always clean lids on canned goods before opening.
- Use a special cutting board or plate for raw meats, poultry and seafood only.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure that food is cooked properly. **Food should reach a minimum temperature of 165F/74C, and a whole bird 185F/85C. This is a very critical point during cooking.**
- When cooling food, reduce portion into individual container to allow it to cool quickly and properly. Place food into the refrigerator within 30 min after it was cooked.

Packaging Food to Bring to Hospital

- Use disposable, single use, freezer grade microwavable packaging e.g. Ziploc Containers
- Food that does not arrive in appropriate containers will not be accepted.
- Clearly label food with patient's first and last name, food item and date and time it was prepared.
- When bringing hot food into the hospital it should be delivered to the patient to eat with in 1 hour.