

Bringing Food to Family

A visitor's guide to bringing safe food to family members at a health care facility in Northern Health



northern health
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What You Need to Know

Guidelines

Some home-made and store-bought treats and meals are safe to bring into a health care facility, but other foods present a risk and require care and attention. It is important that the food you bring in does not:

- Increase the patient/resident's risk of foodborne illness.
- Conflict with special diet considerations (e.g. Allergies, Celiac, Diabetes).
- Increase the risk of choking hazard (e.g. Swallowing difficulties).

To understand whether the food you are bringing in is safe:

- Check with the charge nurse to see if your family member or friend has any allergies or special dietary needs.
- Check with the Food Services Manager or their designate onsite in the facility to review proper preparation and storage.
- Please note that our staff cannot handle the food you bring in with you.

Safe Food Practices

- Always wash your hands with soap and warm running water before and after preparing and serving food. Sanitize food contact surfaces prior to preparing food.
- Keep raw and unwashed fruits and vegetables separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods
- Use new packaging or containers and clearly label food with the patient/resident's name, date it was prepared and description of food. Do not wash and reuse plastic bags or other single use containers.
- Transport food as quickly as possible. Never leave food sitting in a warm vehicle.
- Keep cold food cold (less than 4°C) and hot food hot (above 60°C).
- Foods should be eaten within two hours of preparation.

- Do not share home-made treats with other residents or patients as they may have allergies, therapeutic or texture modified diets restrictions. Take leftovers home with you.

Foods Must be Safe

Some home-prepared and store-bought treats and meals are safe.

Examples include:

- Cakes and squares without cream filling.
- Unopened containers of store-bought juice, yogurt or milk.
- Cookies, muffins, breads, fruit pies or tarts.
- Individual meals prepared in a restaurant or grocery store that day.

Homemade Foods Need Extra Care

Some home-prepared foods can present a risk of food poisoning and require special care and attention. Examples include:

- Casseroles, gravies, cooked or creamed vegetables, eggs and foods containing eggs, homemade dressings, sauces and dips, macaroni or potato salads, and salads containing raw fruits and vegetables.
- Meat, poultry, fish and shellfish dishes, and sandwiches made with fillings like egg, meat, fish, seafood, poultry and cheese.
- Cream, meringue or pumpkin pies, and pastries with meat or cream fillings.

Please Avoid High-Risk Foods

Please do not bring high-risk foods into a hospital or health care facility.

Examples include:

- Home-canned foods, leftovers and previously-heated foods
- Raw sprouts, grapefruit, eggs, seafood and shellfish.
- Ready-to-eat packaged cold meats, meat spreads or seafood platters.
- Unpasteurized milk, unpasteurized milk products, soft and semi-soft cheeses or juices.

These products pose an increased risk of food poisoning and other harmful effects.

Northern Health strives to provide safe and nutritious food to the residents and clients in the region. Food safety is everybody's business. Advance planning is necessary to properly plan to minimize resident risk and to minimize potential for food borne illness for food brought into a health care facility.

It is essential that all foods that have been prepared with the intent of sharing with others (when permitted to do so) come with a list of ingredients for the purpose of protecting against food allergic reactions. Individuals with serious food allergies should not consume food from home sources.

Family members are only to give feeding assistance to their own relative. Only a resident's substitute decision maker can give written permission for someone else to assist with feeding their relative. Then that person can assist that resident as well. The resident's substitute decision maker should discuss this decision with other family members to prevent any future conflict.

Facility staff will dispose all perishable food items found in resident's rooms to decrease the risk of foodborne illness.

Please check with Food Service Manager or designate, Recreation Therapy Staff, and/or an Environmental Health Officer if you are unsure about the safety of a food item you wish to bring to a social function at our facility.

The local Health Unit has information on Food Safety Programs available in your local community.

For more information contact:

Food Services Management (on-site)

Recreation Therapy (on-site)

Environmental Health Officer - Located at Public Health Unit.



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