

Keeping food safe on a picnic

How to make sure the food you take on a picnic stays fresh and safe to eat.

In the summer-time there's nothing nicer than eating a picnic in the fresh air. But when we take food outdoors, it can be easy to let our usual food hygiene standards slip, bringing the risk of [food poisoning](#). So it's really important to remember the '4Cs':

- [chilling](#)
- [cleaning](#)
- [cooking](#)
- [avoiding cross-contamination](#)

Keep things clean

Wash fresh fruits (including those with rinds) and vegetables thoroughly under running tap water before packing them in the cool box.

Wash your hands before preparing your picnic and, where possible, before eating it. If it's not possible to wash your hands at your picnic site, use a wet wipe to clean your hands. Then use a sanitiser on top to sterilise them.

Chill your food

The time between preparing dishes and eating them tends to be longer than normal when you're picnicking. Plan ahead to keep your food cool until you're ready to eat. Any foods which you would usually keep in the fridge at home also need to be kept cool on your picnic. This includes:

- any food with a use-by date
- cooked dishes
- salads
- dairy products

Place these foods in a cool box or cool bag with ice or frozen gel packs distributed throughout, not all at the bottom. You can also use frozen drinks to help keep your cool box cold. Cold food should be stored at below 5°C to prevent bacteria growing.

Aim to minimise the number of times your cool box is opened. This helps to keep the contents cold for longer. For example, if you're using more than one cool box, pack perishable foods in one and drinks in another.

Pack away your picnic once you've eaten

Once you've served up your picnic, put any remaining food back in the cool box to keep cool. If you're out for less than two hours and the food still feels cool when you get home, you can put it back in your fridge. After two hours or more out of the fridge, the risk of bacteria increases and food becomes unsafe to eat. It's best to throw it away when you get home.

To reduce [food waste](#), work out portion sizes and the size of your party, and only pack what you need.

Understanding food poisoning

Many people mistakenly think that food poisoning is just a passing ‘tummy bug’ but it can be really serious. Most people with food poisoning recover at home and don’t need any specific treatment. Find out more about the symptoms of [food poisoning](#) and what to do if someone has severe symptoms. Food poisoning can be caused by various bacteria including:

- [campylobacter](#)
- [salmonella](#)
- [listeria](#)
- some types of E. Coli