



Food Safety Tips

This brochure has been kindly sponsored by Cater Care as a service to aged care facilities.



**FOOD
SAFETY
INFORMATION
COUNCIL**

 **CATER CARE**



Do you cook and bring food to an elderly relative or friend in an aged care facility?

It's really nice to show you care by cooking special favourite meals for the resident of an aged care facility - perhaps culturally specific food or a family favourite which is not normally available in that facility.*

But if you do, you really wouldn't want to make them sick, so there are some things you need to know.

Our immune systems get weaker as we get older. Also, our stomachs produce less acid, which makes it easier for harmful germs to get through the digestive system and invade our bodies.

If elderly people do get food poisoning, they are likely to suffer more severe consequences. These can range from mild dehydration to neuromuscular

dysfunction or even death. Older people also take longer than most of us to recover from food poisoning.

There are some foods that pose a higher risk than others, particularly of passing on a Listeria infection which is dangerous for the elderly.

*Aged care homes have different rules about accepting and reheating food provided by friends or relatives. Please check with the facility.

The elderly person may have special dietary requirements or restrictions of which you are unaware. Please check with the staff before providing food to an elderly resident.

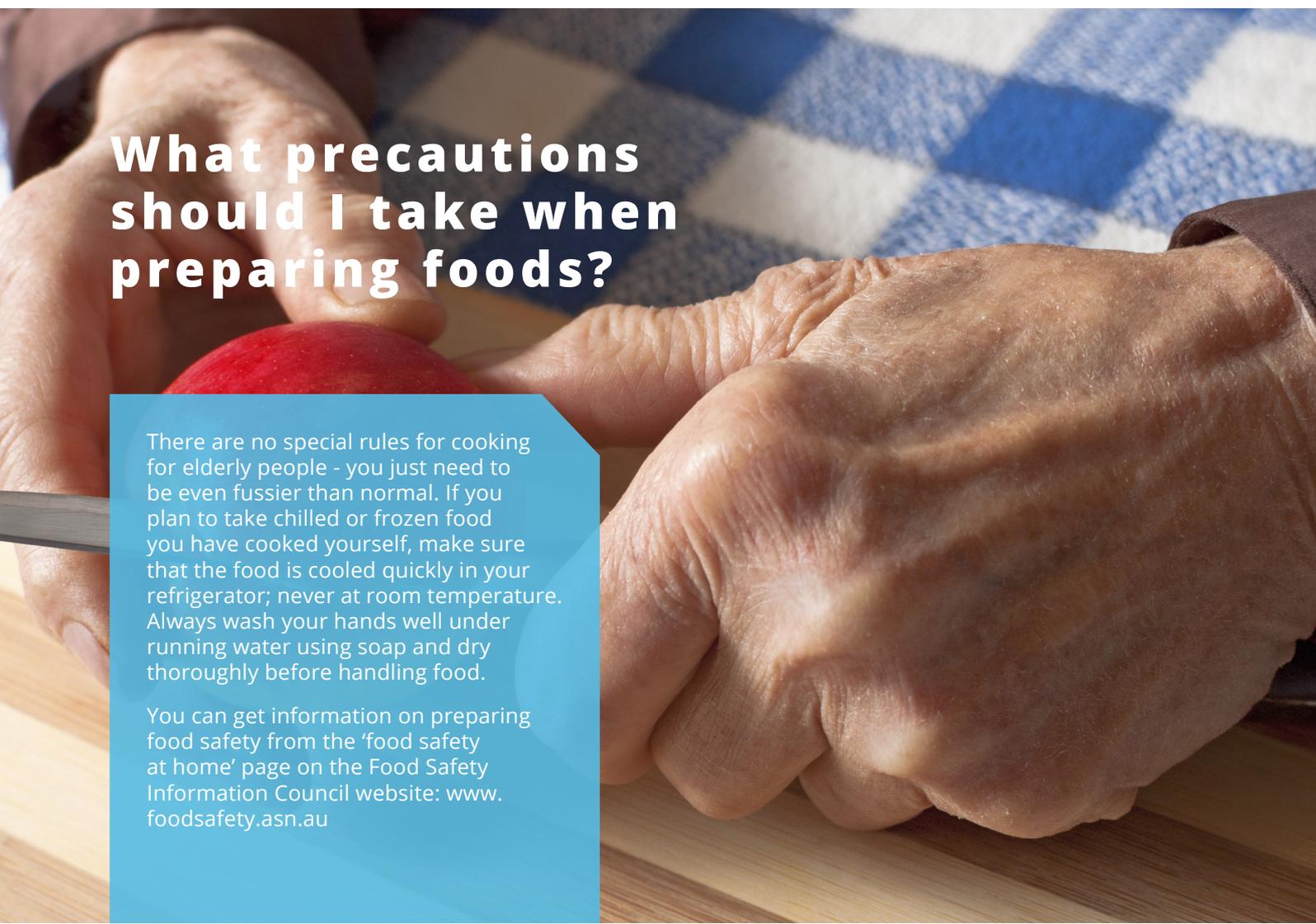
What are the higher risk foods?

Cold meats	Cooked or uncooked, packaged or unpackaged e.g. Roast beef, ham etc.
Cold cooked chicken	Purchased whole, portions, sliced or diced and pre-packaged chicken sandwiches
Pate	Refrigerated pate, liverwurst or meat spreads
Salads	Pre-prepared or pre-packaged fruit, vegetables or salads e.g. from salad bars, retail outlets etc.
Chilled seafood	Raw or smoked ready-to-eat e.g. oysters, sashimi or sushi, smoked salmon or trout, sandwich fillings, pre-cooked peeled prawns such as in prawn cocktails and salads
Cheese	Pre-packaged and delicatessen soft, semi soft and surface ripened cheeses e.g. brie, camembert, ricotta, feta and blue
Ice cream	Soft serve
Other dairy	Unpasteurised dairy products e.g. raw milk, cheese or yoghurt made from raw milk

For full details, please refer to the pamphlet 'Listeria and food - advice for people at risk' on the FSANZ website: www.foodstandards.gov.au/publications/Pages/listeriabrochuretext.aspx

Foods made with raw egg such as homemade egg mayonnaise, hollandaise sauce, uncooked cakes and desserts and egg-nog can also be dangerous for the elderly.

YOU SHOULD NOT PROVIDE THESE FOODS TO AN ELDERLY RESIDENT



What precautions should I take when preparing foods?

There are no special rules for cooking for elderly people - you just need to be even fussier than normal. If you plan to take chilled or frozen food you have cooked yourself, make sure that the food is cooled quickly in your refrigerator; never at room temperature. Always wash your hands well under running water using soap and dry thoroughly before handling food.

You can get information on preparing food safety from the 'food safety at home' page on the Food Safety Information Council website: www.foodsafety.asn.au

How can I transport food safely for an elderly person?

You will need to transport your food to the aged care facility so take care that it is protected from contamination during transport and if it is chilled food, it is kept cool or if you are taking it hot, you keep it hot during the journey.

Food should be kept at 5°C or cooler. For hot food, at 60°C or hotter.

Between 5 and 60 degrees is known as the temperature danger zone because harmful bacteria multiply to dangerous levels in food when it is kept between these temperatures.

Put cold food into a cooler with ice packs when travelling to visit your relative or friend. Don't pack food if it has just been cooked and is still warm. Coolers cannot cool food; they can only keep cold food cool. Always cover pre-prepared foods securely and pre-chill them; for example, keep in the refrigerator overnight. Other perishable foods and drinks must also be cold when put in the cooler.

Hot food is difficult to keep hot and is best avoided if you are travelling long distances. It is best to chill the food overnight and reheat it at the residence. If you must take hot food on a longer journey, an insulated jug

preheated with boiling water before being filled with the steaming hot food can be used.

If you are unsure whether the jug will keep the food above 60°C, try filling it with water at 90°C, seal and test the water temperature after the length of time you expect your journey to take. If it is still above 60°C then you can use the jug. You will need a food thermometer to do this test. If any perishable food you bring is not eaten immediately, make sure it is refrigerated before you leave.

Reheating Food

Reheating food in a microwave oven

Different aged care facilities will have different rules about reheating food provided by friends or relatives. In some, staff will reheat the food; in others, staff are not permitted to do so. In some facilities, the elderly person can reheat the food themselves; in others the person providing the food must do the reheating.

Check with the staff to find out the rules in that facility. Make sure staff know that you have brought in food and ask them how to go about reheating it.

Food needs to be reheated to a minimum of 75°C to kill any bacteria or viruses that might be present in the food.*

*Some foods may be ruined when heated to this temperature. Consider this in your food choice.



Storage of the food you bring in

When you bring food into an aged care facility for a relative or friend, it is you and not the staff who is responsible for its safety.

If any perishable food you have provided is not eaten immediately, tell the staff and ask them about storing the food in a refrigerator.

Some elderly people like to keep extra food in their rooms in drawers or bedside tables for eating later. While this is okay for shelf-stable foods like cakes, biscuits and chocolates, this can be very risky with perishable food such as cold meats, custard or cream filled cakes, cooked vegetables, and meat dishes.

Leaving perishable food in the temperature danger zone for too long before eating can result in food borne illness. Food which can cause food poisoning may not look or taste spoiled.

Sometimes elderly people can also forget how long the food has been there.

If you bring commercially prepared food, make sure the elderly person is aware of any 'best before' or 'use by' date on the food.

If you are cooking for an elderly person, please check the 'food safety at home' page on the Food Safety Information Council's website: www.foodsafety.asn.au for more information on preparing food safely.

Make sure you tell the staff if the elderly person has some perishable food in their room.

Food Safety Information Council

The Food Safety Information Council is a health promotion charity with representatives of state and federal governments, food industry and professional associations. Membership is open to any organisation with an interest in promoting safe food handling practices for consumers.

We aim to reduce the over four million cases of food poisoning in Australia each year by educating consumers to handle food safely from the time it leaves the retailer until it appears on the plate.

We organise Food Safety Week each November as part of our campaign to pass on simple messages to improve consumers' knowledge of how to handle, store and cook food safely.

For more information:

Email: info@foodsafety.asn.au

Website: www.foodsafety.asn.au

