



Guidelines for bringing food or drinks into hospital for patients



Can I bring food in for a patient?

You can bring food for a patient, as long as it is safe (see list) and the patient is not on a special diet or experiencing swallowing problems.

For patients on a special diet or with swallowing difficulties, please check with the medical team or the Dietitian.

What is food poisoning?

Food poisoning is caused by eating food that contains harmful levels of disease-causing bacteria or toxins. It can have unpleasant effects and in some cases serious effects.

Food can become dangerous if it is not handled safely during:

- All stages of preparation
- Cooking
- Storage
- Transportation
- Serving

Food poisoning can be very serious for patients recovering from illness or an operation, therefore St Vincent's Private Hospital Sydney has guidelines about what food can and should not be brought in.

The immune system of many patients in hospital are considerably lower than those not in hospital. Food which is left in an uncontrolled temperature range for more than four hours is dangerous and needs to be discarded as it may cause serious food poisoning.

The symptoms of food poisoning vary but usually include one or more of the following: cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fever and headaches.

Why is this important to St Vincent's?

Our hospital is committed to providing a safe environment for patients and must comply with the Australian Food Safety Standards, including the additional requirements for food service to vulnerable persons, and the NSW Food Act.

All St Vincent's Private Hospital facilities are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with these laws, regulations and standards. Additionally we conduct our own internal quality assurance activities, so you can feel confident in the safety of the food we prepare and provide. If alternative food items are brought in, or ordered, we strongly encourage this is limited to SAFE foods to minimise any risk to the patient's health.

The lists of SAFE and UNSAFE foods included on the following page are used to help prevent food poisoning only. The lists do not reflect any dietary restrictions required due to a patient's medical condition. Please talk to the Dietitian for additional dietary information if required.

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Which foods are SAFE?

For patients with no dietary restrictions, you can bring:

- Muesli bars, pretzels, potato chips, crackers or biscuits
- Whole, fresh washed fruit or dried fruit
- Bread, bagels, unleavened bread
- Muffins, cakes, scones, pikelets (no cream)
- Boiled lollies, liquorice, mints or chocolates
- Drinks (non-alcoholic beverages)



Which foods are potentially UNSAFE?

- Any food that can spoil if not refrigerated
- Raw, under-cooked or pre-cooked meat, chicken, fish, tofu, shellfish or oysters
- Sushi or sashimi
- Milk or yoghurt products with probiotics
- Soft cheeses, deli meats, pates or dips
- Salads with creamy dressings; coleslaw or potato salad
- Soft serve ice cream and frozen yoghurt
- Rice, pasta dishes, casseroles or soups
- Kombucha, kimchi, sauerkraut or miso products
- Sweets containing cream or custard
- Sandwiches with meat, fish, chicken or cheese
- Prepacked salads and fruit salads
- Takeaway foods: including foods delivered by food delivery companies to hospital



Storage and re-heating of food

St Vincent's Private Hospital Sydney does not accept responsibility for food prepared externally that is given to patients by family and friends.

Fridges provided in patient rooms are for drinks only and not for storing any foods.

If potentially unsafe foods are brought in for a patient, that food should be consumed immediately and not stored.

All foods brought in for a patient that is on the SAFE foods list should be stored in a disposable, airtight container.

Need More Information?

Please contact Hospital Food Services on (02) 8382 7302

Food Standards Australia New Zealand:
www.foodstandards.gov.au

NSW Food Authority:
www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au