



Can I bring food into hospital for a patient?



**ST VINCENT'S
PRIVATE HOSPITAL**
MELBOURNE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

INFORMATION FOR CARERS AND VISITORS

There is a risk of food poisoning when food is not properly prepared, transported or stored. This information has been developed to help prevent food poisoning.

CAN I BRING FOOD IN FOR A PATIENT?

Yes, as long as it is safe (see list below) and the patient is not on a special diet or experiencing swallowing problems. For patients on a special diet, with cultural or religious needs or with swallowing difficulties, please check with the Dietitian. Family and friends sometimes bring in food as a treat for patients to supplement the hospital menu. Please bring food items into hospital in a disposable container.

WHAT FOOD IS SAFE TO BRING FOR PATIENTS?

For patients on a normal diet you can bring:

- Pretzels, potato chips, dry biscuits
- Muesli bars, sweet biscuits
- Fresh and dried fruit
- Bread, bread sticks, bagels, unleavened bread
- Muffins, cakes, scones, pikelets (no cream)
- Boiled lollies, liquorice, mints, chocolates
- Drinks e.g. soft drinks, non-alcoholic beverages

WHAT FOOD IS POTENTIALLY UNSAFE TO BRING FOR PATIENTS?

- Any food that can spoil if not refrigerated
- Raw or cooked meat, poultry, fish, shellfish, oysters
- Rice and pasta dishes, casseroles, soups
- Soft cheeses, deli meats, pates, milk
- Salads and other items containing dairy products or creamy dressings e.g. coleslaw, potato salad
- Sweet dishes containing cream or custard
- Sandwiches with potentially hazardous food e.g. meat, fish, poultry, cheese

All potentially unsafe food items that arrive to the ward must be consumed immediately or discarded.

STORAGE AND RE-HEATING OF FOOD

NOTE: *St Vincent's Private Hospital does not accept responsibility for food prepared externally that is given to patients by family and friends. There are, however, storage and re-heating facilities available. Discuss these with nursing staff.*

Advise staff about any food you bring in that requires storage or re-heating. Staff will ensure it is labelled with the following information:

- Patient's name and room number
- Date food was prepared, by whom and contact phone number
- Date food was brought into the hospital

WHAT IS FOOD POISONING?

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

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

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

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

Food poisoning can be very serious for patients recovering from illness or an operation so St Vincent's Private Hospital has guidelines about what food can and can't be brought in. The lists of SAFE and UNSAFE food are used to help prevent food poisoning only. The lists do not reflect that many people must follow a specific diet because of their medical condition. Please talk to the Dietitian for further information.

WHY DOES ST VINCENT'S PRIVATE HOSPITAL HAVE TO BE SO STRICT?

The hospital is committed to providing a safe environment for patients and must comply with the Australian food safety standards and the Victorian Food Act 1984.

All St Vincent's Private Hospital facilities are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with these laws, regulations and standards.

The immune system of many patients in hospitals 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.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Please contact a hospital Dietitian on (03) 9411 7550.

Victorian Department of Health website: www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Food Safety Victoria website: www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/food-safety