

# Food Brought in From Outside Sources

## POLICY

Food from outside sources will be handled according to best food safety practices to protect residents from foodborne illnesses. Dietary or other designated staff will monitor all food and beverages from outside sources for storage in personal refrigerators, community refrigerators, and dry storage locations.

## PROCEDURE

1. Dietary or other designated staff will educate visitors, volunteers, and others not employed or contracted with the center on safe food handling, preparation, and storage practices to prevent cross-contact, cross-contamination, and food hazards.
2. Dietary or other designated staff will inspect outside food to identify potential concerns based on smell, appearance, and packaging.
3. Dietary, designated staff, or the person providing the outside food will label time-temperature controlled for safety (TCS) food with the date of preparation and the resident's name and room number.
4. TCS foods will be stored apart from the center's food in cold storage at a safe temperature and discarded within seven days from the date of preparation. Food prepared for events will also be identified and stored separately from the center's food.
5. All cold storage units will have thermometers to ensure that refrigerators maintain a maximum temperature of 41°F (5°C), and freezers a temperature cold enough to keep food frozen — usually 0°F (-18°C). Dietary or other designated staff will monitor and document cold storage unit temperatures.
6. Dietary staff or other designated staff will reheat food to at least 165°F (74°C) for 15 seconds in a microwave not used by the center's kitchen and allow to cool to an acceptable temperature before serving to prevent burns.

## Food Safety for Your Loved One

Nursing home residents are a highly susceptible population, meaning they are more likely than the general public to develop a foodborne illness — or food poisoning — and experience severe consequences like hospitalization from them as a result.

So, if you plan to bring food to your loved one, please ensure that you have handled, prepared, and stored it safely.

To keep your loved ones safe:

- **Avoid bare-hand contact with ready-to-eat (RTE) foods.** Even with proper handwashing, a small number of bacteria can remain on your hands and be just enough to make your loved one ill. Therefore, always use single-use gloves, tongs, deli tissue, or other serving utensils when handling or serving RTE foods like sandwiches, burgers, pizza, washed fruits or vegetables, and bakery items.
- **Avoid unpasteurized soft-cooked eggs, juices, and raw seed sprouts.** Eggs have the potential to carry *Salmonella*, which can survive if not cooked through. Therefore, avoid serving eggs where the yolk is runny and raw egg products like homemade tiramisu and eggnog unless you use pasteurized eggs. Unpasteurized juice may also contain harmful bacteria and is unsafe for your loved one. Unpasteurized juice will carry a warning label, but this label isn't required for juice or cider sold by the glass at places like apple orchards or farmers' markets. Raw seed sprouts are also unsafe to serve since they are grown in warm, humid conditions where bacteria thrive.
- **Avoid raw or undercooked animal foods.** Like eggs, raw and undercooked meats and seafood could contain bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses. Therefore, always cook meats and seafood to their safe minimal internal temperature:
  - **145°F (63°C) for 15 seconds:** whole cuts of meats and seafood
  - **145°F (63°C) for 4 minutes:** roasts
  - **155°F (68°C) for 17 seconds:** cooked, ground, or tenderized meats
  - **165°F (74°C) (instantaneous):** all poultry, stuffed meats and pasta
- **Be mindful of special diets.** If your loved one is on a texture-modified diet, only bring foods appropriate for their diet to reduce the risk of choking or aspiration (when food or liquid enters the airway). Please also avoid sharing food with other residents.
- **Label food.** Label food requiring cold storage with the date you opened or prepared it, as these foods must be consumed or tossed after seven days.