

Bringing Food into Hospital

Guidelines for Patients and Visitors

- Visitors should be advised against bringing food or snacks (sandwiches/rolls) into NHS Lothian as NHS Lothian cannot accept responsibility if the person then becomes ill because of food poisoning.
- If a patient has particular dietary needs or “dislikes” this should be discussed with the Catering Service and Dietitian to ensure appropriate meal provision.
- If visitors insist on bringing in food for their relatives it is important that items of a high-risk nature such as sandwiches (except jam, honey), trifles, fresh cream cakes are documented in the patient notes along with action taken to prevent food poisoning. Ideally this food should be consumed at the visiting time, but if it is not, it should be wrapped, labelled and stored within the ward refrigerator for no longer than twenty-four hours, after which it should be discarded.
- **Food brought in from home or other outside establishments** should be discouraged. However, if patients are insistent, they should be made aware of any risk, and this should be documented in their case notes, including what was consumed and where it originated from. Take-away meals should be purchased from a reputable supplier. They must be eaten within 30 minutes of purchase.
- Patient’s fruit should be washed prior to consumption.

Guidelines for Staff Bringing their Own Food into Work

- Ensure all coffee, tea, sugar and biscuits are kept in closed containers. These should be stored on a separate shelf or cupboard and clearly labelled for staff use.
- Items brought in for consumption should be contained in a rigid container with a lid and labelled with the date and name of the staff member.
- Carrier bags should not be used for the storage of food in fridges.
- If staff need to use the same fridge as patients the food should be kept on a different shelf from patient’s food.
- Spills should be cleaned immediately.
- Staff fridges must be kept clean and the temperature should be checked and recorded twice daily.
- **Under no circumstances** should staff use Occupational Therapy kitchens for cooking and storing foods.
- Staff must take responsibility to discard their un-used food following completion of their shift.
- Food should only be consumed in designated dining areas.