

SAFE LUNCH STUDY GUIDE

Make sure your child's lunch passes from kitchen to cafeteria in A+ condition with these helpful tips from www.homefoodsafety.org.

✓ ***Start Each Day With a Clean Slate***

Start each day off fresh by making sure your child's lunch box or lunch bag is washed with warm soapy water after each use. It's just one more way to keep lunchtime bacteria at bay!

✓ ***Skip the Shortcuts***

On hectic mornings when preparing your child's lunch, take the time to avoid shortcuts that can lead to foodborne illness. Be sure to wash your hands before, during and after preparing children's lunches. Make sure counters and surfaces are clean and any remnants of last night's dinner are long gone to prevent cross-contamination.

✓ ***Stay Cool for School***

Perishable foods should not be left out of refrigeration for more than two hours, but many students don't have access to a refrigerator at school. Help keep your child's lunch safe by packing it in an insulated lunch bag or lunch box and including an ice pack or frozen beverage container.

✓ ***Create a (Shelf) Stable Environment***

If refrigeration is unavailable at your child's school, consider substituting perishables with shelf-stable foods such as trail mix, individual boxes of cereal, granola bars, bagels, carrot and celery sticks, whole fruit, dried fruit, single-serve applesauce and whole-grain crackers.

✓ ***Mind Your Fruits and Veggies***

In addition to washing vegetables and ready-to-eat fruits like apples and grapes, parents also should rinse peel-and-eat fruits like bananas and oranges to eliminate harmful bacteria that can spread during peeling or cutting.

✓ ***Chill Out Right at Night***

If you prepare your child's lunch the night before, make sure perishable food items such as yogurt and meat or cheese sandwiches are properly stored in a refrigerator set below 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Not sure what the temperature is in your fridge? Invest in a refrigerator thermometer.

✓ ***Lend a Helping Hand***

Remind your child to wash their hands before lunch at school or consider packing a moist towelette or hand sanitizer in their lunch container. Also, help teach kids the importance of lathering up before digging in by reinforcing good habits at home. Encourage them to sing two choruses of "Happy Birthday" (about 20 seconds) while washing their hands before all meals.

✓ ***Leave Leftovers Behind***

Some kids keep their lunchtime leftovers for an afternoon snack, but not all foods can go the distance. Encourage your kids to throw away perishable foods right after lunch, and pack extra nonperishable food items for them to enjoy as an afternoon pick-me-up.

