



**SAFE
SCHOOL
SCHOLAR'S
LUNCHES**

PACKING SAFE SCHOOL LUNCHES

Many students buy lunch at school cafeterias. Many more bring lunch in a familiar paper bag or lunch box. The last thing you want to do is pack an unsafe lunch which could cause a serious illness! Safe “bag lunches” are as important as learning math and science. In fact, food safety is a science.

By following some simple food safety rules, students can avoid getting sick from lunch that was not handled properly. Here are some basic tips for carrying a safe lunch to school:

Keep Foods Clean

Keep everything clean when packing a lunch. That not only goes for the food, but also for food preparation surfaces, hands and utensils. Use hot, soapy water. Do not use the same surface for preparing raw and cooked foods without cleaning it first. Keep toddlers and family pets away from kitchen counters. **WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE YOU PREPARE OR EAT FOOD.**

Keep Hot Foods Hot

Foods like soup, chili and stew need to stay hot. Use an insulated bottle stored in an insulated lunch box. Fill the bottle with boiling water, let stand for a few minutes, empty, and then put in the piping hot food. Keep the insulated bottle closed until lunch to keep the food hot.

Keep Cold Foods Cold

The best way to keep food cold is with an insulated lunch box. When packing lunches, include either freezer gel packs, widely available in stores, or cold food items such as fruit, or small frozen juice packs. Nestle perishable meat, poultry or egg sandwiches between these cold items. Sandwiches can also be made ahead of time and kept refrigerated or frozen before placing in the lunch box.

Freezer gel packs will keep foods cold until lunch time, but generally will not work for all-day storage. Any perishable leftovers after lunch should be discarded and not brought back home.

Instead of the insulated lunch box, brown paper bags or plastic lunch bags may also be used, but do not work as well because the bags tend to become soggy or leak as cold foods thaw. If paper or plastic bags are used, create layers by double bagging to help insulate the food. Shelf-stable foods that will hold without refrigeration are good for lunches. These include fresh fruits and vegetables, cookies, crackers, peanut butter sandwiches, canned meats, packaged pudding, and canned fruits and vegetables. Also, control the environment where the lunch bag or box is kept at school to help keep foods cold. Keep out of direct sunlight and away from radiators or other heat sources.

For more information on packing safe lunches for school (and yes, work, too!) contact:



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