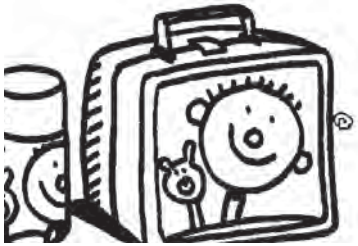
BACK TO SCHOOL

Quick Tips to Packing a Safe Lunch



- Freeze single-sized juice packs overnight and place the frozen drink in your child's lunch. The juice will thaw by lunchtime, but will still be cold. The frozen drink will also help keep the rest of the lunch cold.
- Wash fruits and vegetables before packing them in your child's lunch.
- Cold food should stay cold. Freezer gel packs and insulated lunch boxes are great for keeping cold foods cold until lunchtime. Any perishable food (i.e. meat, poultry or egg sandwiches) not eaten at lunch should be discarded.
- If your child chooses a brown paper bag to carry lunch, it's especially important to include a cold source. Be sure to use an extra paper bag to create a double layer. Double bagging will also help insulate the food better.
- Have your child use the refrigerator at school, if possible. If not, make sure they keep their lunch out of direct sunlight and away from radiators, baseboards and other heat sources found in the classroom.
- If you make sandwiches the night before, keep them in the refrigerator until packing up to go in the morning.

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May 2011

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Food Safety

Ten Least Wanted Foodborne Pathogens

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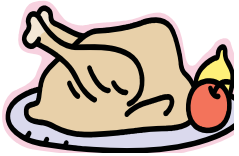
Foodborne Illness: Ten Least Wanted Foodborne Pathogens



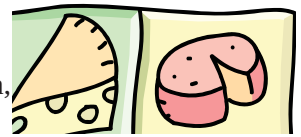
Campylobacter
Most common bacterial cause of diarrhea in the United States; Sources: raw and undercooked meat and poultry, raw milk and untreated water

Clostridium botulinum

This organism produces a toxin which causes botulism, a life-threatening illness that can prevent the breathing muscles from moving air in and out of the lungs. Sources: home-prepared foods and herbal oils; honey should not be fed to children less than 12 months old

E. coli O157:H7
A bacterium that can produce a deadly toxin and causes approximately 73,000 cases of foodborne illness each year in the U.S.; Sources: meat, especially undercooked or raw hamburger, produce and raw milk.

Listeria monocytogenes



Causes listeriosis, a serious disease for pregnant women, newborns and adults with a weakened immune system; Sources: soil and water. It has been found in dairy products including soft cheeses as well as in raw and undercooked meat, poultry, seafood and produce

Norovirus
This virus is the leading cause of diarrhea in the United States. Any food can be contaminated with norovirus if handled by someone who is infected with this virus. Frequent handwashing reduces the spread of this illness.

Salmonella

Most common cause of foodborne deaths. Responsible for millions of cases of foodborne illness a year; Sources: raw and undercooked eggs, undercooked poultry and meat, dairy products, seafood, fruits and vegetables.

Shigella
Causes an estimated 300,000 cases of diarrhea illnesses. Poor hygiene causes Shigella to be easily passed from person to person. Sources: salads, milk and dairy products, and unclean water.

Staphylococcus aureus

This bacterium produces a toxin that causes vomiting shortly after ingesting; Sources: cooked foods high in protein (e.g. cooked ham, salads, bakery products, dairy products)

Toxoplasma gondii
A parasite that causes toxoplasmosis, a very severe disease that can produce central nervous system disorders particularly mental retardation and visual impairment in children. Pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk; Sources: meat, primarily pork.

Vibrio vulnificus
Causes gastroenteritis or a syndrome known as primary septicemia. People with liver diseases are especially at high risk; Sources: raw or undercooked seafood.

Prevention

Clean

- Wash hands and surfaces often.
- Clean (soap and hot water) and sanitize surfaces.

Separate

- Don't cross contaminate. Keep certain foods, like meats and their juices, separated from other foods during storage and preparation.

Cook

- Cook to proper temperatures. The "danger zone" is between 41°F and 135°F.
- Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature.

Chill

- Store cold foods at 41°F or below.
- Cool hot food in 6 hours or less