



Food Safety Program

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that 48 million people get food poisoning every year in the United States. Children are at greater risk for food poisoning, because their immune systems are still developing. Help prevent food poisoning and follow these tips when preparing food for your family.

Keep Perishable Foods Cold

- **Keep perishable foods at 41°F or below.** This will limit the growth of bacteria on perishable foods like lunchmeat, tuna, egg salad, string cheese and milk.
- **Keep food in the refrigerator.** If your child's school has refrigerators, ask to keep your child's lunch in the refrigerator until lunch time.
- **Use a frozen gel pack in your child's lunchbox** to keep the lunch cold. If you don't have a gel pack, use a frozen water bottle or juice box.
- **Consider packing non-perishable foods.** Foods like peanut butter and jelly, fresh fruit, fresh cut vegetables, and pretzels are less likely to spoil.

Health and Handwashing

- **Always wash hands** with soap and water for 20 seconds before preparing food. Wash hands again if you sneeze, cough or change tasks. Remind children to wash their hands before they eat their lunch.
- **Have someone else prepare food if you are sick** with symptoms like diarrhea, vomiting and fever. Some illnesses can be passed to others when preparing food.

Keep it Clean

- **Clean and sanitize cutting boards and counters** before preparing food. This helps keep food clean from possible germs.
- **Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood** from other food. Use one cutting board for fresh produce and a separate cutting board for raw meat, poultry and seafood.
- **Wash your child's lunch box every day.**

Safe Food

- **Check that canned food is not expired.** Don't use canned food if the can is swollen at the ends, severely dented on the seam, or rusted and leaking.
- **Look out for food allergies.** If your child has food allergies, double check food labels and read ingredients. Try discouraging trading food at lunch—you never know when food prepared by other parents might have something that your child is allergic to.



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