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UC FOOD SAFETY CE UPDATE

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Packing Safe Lunches

The new school year is starting and that means new school supplies. Backpacks, notebooks, pencils, and markers top the list. One important item that shouldn't be overlooked is an insulated lunch bag. And these lunch bags aren't just for kids.



Anyone that takes a lunch should use one of these handy bags. When referring to lunches as being safe, this means safe from foodborne illness. Foods can become contaminated during prep and/or storing time. Use the information in this newsletter to ensure you and your family have safe and tasty meals away from home.

Getting Ready to Make Lunch

The main thing to keep in mind when preparing lunches is cleanliness.

We carry millions of microbes on our hands. Most are harmless, but we can pick up some that can cause illnesses such as colds, flu, and diarrhea. The single most important way to stop the spread of germs is to wash your hands.

For this reason, it should be the first thing you do before starting to prepare meals. Remember to wash with soap and warm water. Hands should be scrubbed for at least twenty seconds (the time it

takes to sing the *Happy Birthday* song) and then rinsed under warm running water.

Next, make sure your work area is clean. Wash countertops with a solution of one teaspoon of chlorine bleach in about 1 quart of water or with a commercial kitchen cleaning agent diluted according to product directions.

To prevent cross-contamination, always use a clean cutting board. If possible, use one cutting board for fresh produce or bread and a separate one for meat, poultry, and seafood.

Preparing Foods

With clean hands and counters, you are now ready to prepare the food. Keep these tips in mind:

- Wash fruits and vegetables under running tap water, **including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten.**
- Wash can lids before opening to keep dirt from getting into food.
- Always wash and sanitize cutting boards after using them for raw meats and before using them for ready to eat foods.
- Always wash utensils between cutting different foods, especially raw meats.
- Put perishables back in the refrigerator as soon as possible.

Keep Hot Foods Hot and Cold Foods Cold

Bacteria that cause foodborne illness grow rapidly. The number doubles every 20 minutes on foods left in the danger zone (40°F-140°F). Food can become unsafe to eat in just 2 hours if left at room temperature. Foods kept at temperatures above 90°F can become unsafe in 1 hour.

Storing foods at the proper temperature can help reduce the risk of illness. Keep foods either above 140°F or below 40°F. High temperatures kill bacteria and low temperatures slow their growth.

Bacteria that cause foodborne illness grow quickly on certain types of foods. Meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, soft cheese, cut fruits and vegetables are most likely to be attacked by foodborne bacteria.

Foods to keep cold:

- Peeled or cut fruits and vegetables
- Milk, soft cheese, yogurt
- Eggs
- Meat, poultry, fish
- Pasta salad

Foods to keep hot:

- Soups
- Chili
- Casseroles

Foods safe at room temperature:

- Bread, crackers, cereal
- Peanut butter
- Whole, uncut fruits and vegetables
- Unopened canned fruit
- Dried fruit, nuts, seeds
- Unopened juice boxes
- Unopened cans of tuna, meats, or poultry

**Bacteria
like warm
temperatures.**

Transporting Lunches Safely

Pack just the amount of perishable food that can be eaten at lunchtime. That way, there won't be a problem about the storage or safety of leftovers.

Use an insulated lunch bag. Include an ice pack or freeze juice box or water bottle. The drink will be defrosted by



lunchtime and the perishables will still be cold. To keep hot foods hot, use an insulated thermos. Before using, fill with hot water and let sit for a few minutes.

Always wash insulated lunch bags with hot soapy water after each use. Following these guidelines will reduce the risk of foodborne illness.