

# food&family

## Tips On Packing Safe School Lunches

(NAPSA)—With a little care and planning, it's possible for parents to pack school lunches that are both tasty and safe. To help, here are some tips:

For starters, parents are reminded to follow the Be Food Safe basic practices of Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill to help reduce their family's risk of foodborne illness. When packing lunches to take to school or the office, keep the following food safety tips in mind:

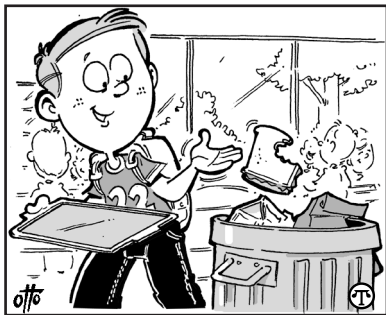
- Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before you prepare food or after playing outside, touching pets and using the bathroom. Sing "Happy Birthday" twice while washing hands to make sure you are washing long enough to send germs down the drain.

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

- Rinse fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Dry with a paper towel.

- If lunches are made at home the night before, keep them in the refrigerator until it's time to go. Make sure the refrigerator is 40° F or below at all times and use an appliance thermometer to check the temperature.

- Use an insulated lunch box, with an insulated bottle for hot foods or a frozen gel pack or a



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frozen juice box to keep perishable foods cold.

- Wash insulated lunch totes or boxes with hot soapy water after each use.

- Smart students and parents never leave perishable foods out at room temperature for more than two hours. Toss any perishable food not eaten at lunchtime.

Since September is National Food Safety Education Month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the nonprofit Partnership for Food Safety Education are providing tips to help parents keep their children and themselves healthy. For free stuff for kids, teachers and parents—such as worksheets and curriculum materials—visit [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org).

For more information on packing safe lunches, visit [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov) or call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at (888) 674-6854 or ask a food safety question at [AskKaren.gov](http://AskKaren.gov).