

BAC! ® to School

Quick Tips to Packing a Safe Lunch

When it's back-to-school time, Fight BAC! ® wants to remind parents and families across the city that the first important lesson of the school year is packing a safe lunch. All it takes is a quick refresher course:

Pack a Safe Lunch 101

Quick Tips to Packing a Safe School Lunch

- Always keep it clean. Wash your hands with warm water and soap, and use hot, soapy water to make sure food preparation surfaces and utensils are clean. Teach your children to wash their hands with warm water and soap before they eat. Also, rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water and blot dry with a paper towel before packing them in your child's lunch.
- Be sure to keep hot foods such as soup, chili, or stew hot by using an insulated bottle. Fill the bottle with boiling water and let it stand for a few minutes. Empty the bottle and then fill it with piping hot food. Keep the bottle closed until lunch.
- Insulated, soft-sided lunch totes are best for keeping perishable food cold, but metal or plastic lunch boxes and paper bags can also be used. If using paper lunch bags, create layers by double bagging to help insulate the food. A cold source, such as a small frozen gel pack or frozen juice box, should be packed with perishable food in any type of lunch bag or box. After lunch, discard all used food packaging and paper bags. Do not reuse paper or plastic bags.
- Freezer gel packs will keep foods cold until lunchtime, but are not recommended for all-day storage.
- Try freezing single sized juice packs overnight and placing the frozen drink in your child's lunch. If your child's lunchtime is late enough, the juice will thaw by lunchtime, but it will still be cold. The frozen drink will also keep the rest of the lunch cold.
- Tell your child to use the refrigerator at school, if one is available. If not, make sure he or she keeps the lunch out of direct sunlight and away from radiators, baseboards and other heat sources found in the classroom.
- Any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, egg sandwiches, fresh-cut fruits and vegetables) not eaten at lunch should be thrown away.

- Every parent should have a supply of shelf-stable foods for easy packing. These include crackers, peanut butter sandwiches, packaged pudding and canned fruits and meats.
- If you make sandwiches the night before, keep them in the refrigerator until packing up to go in the morning.

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns about food safety you may contact:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Meat and Poultry Hotline at 888-674-6854.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Information Line at 888-SAFE-FOOD.

The Shelby City Health Department at 419-342-5226.