

## FOOD SAFETY TIPS FOR SCHOOL LUNCHES

It's back to school time and the daily routine of making school lunches is underway. Here are some ways to reduce the risk of foodborne illness and keep lunches safe to eat.



### Keep it CLEAN

- Wash your hands before making lunches. Teach children to wash their hands before helping in the kitchen and before eating.
- Give fruits and vegetables a thorough washing, rubbing or rinsing in clean running water. Scrub hard surfaced produce such as carrots, oranges, avocados and melons with a clean vegetable brush. Tip: No soap is needed.



- Wash fruits and vegetables even if the rind or skin will not be eaten. This reduces the risk of any surface germs moving to the inside when fruits and vegetables are cut or peeled.
- Wash or wipe reusable lunch bags and containers daily with warm soapy water, and dry.
- Wash kitchen tools with soap and hot water or put them in the dishwasher. After washing sinks, counter tops and any kitchen tools such as wooden cutting boards that cannot go in the dishwasher, they can be sanitized with a mild bleach solution. Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp of bleach in 2 cups of water.
- Boost food safety in the kitchen. Change kitchen dishcloths, tea towels and hand towels at least twice a week, and always after preparing raw meat, poultry and fish.

### Keep it HOT

- Put hot food such as chili, soup, stew and pasta in an insulated bottle or Thermos®. Preheat the bottle with boiling water for a few minutes, drain and add the hot food.
- Using leftovers for school lunches? Refrigerate them quickly after a meal and use in a day or two. Reheat food to at least 74°C (165°F).

### Keep it COLD

- Pack lunches in insulated lunch containers and add frozen freezer packs. Frozen single-sized juice boxes can also be tucked in lunch bags to help keep food cold.
- Pack a chilled sandwich. Make the sandwich the night before and refrigerate. Some types of sandwiches can be frozen, which is another way to keep lunches cold.



- Put lunch items in an insulated lunch bag and chill overnight in the refrigerator. In the morning, add any frozen items and your child's lunch will stay cold longer.
- Food such as whole fruits and vegetables, crackers, nuts, packaged puddings and unopened canned food do not need to be kept cold. However, they can be chilled to help keep lunches cold.

For more information, check out the resources listed below:

1. A pamphlet "Keeping School Lunches Safe" can be ordered from Environmental Health. Call 403-943-2288. The pamphlet is also on our website: [http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/publichealth/envhealth/education/documents/School\\_Lunches\\_2004.pdf](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/publichealth/envhealth/education/documents/School_Lunches_2004.pdf)
2. Health Canada, Mercury in Fish, Consumption Advice: Making Informed Decisions about Fish <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/chem-chim/environ/mercur/cons-adv-etud-eng.php> Click on the link, then scroll down to the "Canned Tuna" section for Health Canada's recommended weekly serving amounts of canned albacore (white) tuna for children, ages 1-4 years old and 5-11 years old, and for women who are or may become pregnant or are breastfeeding. Note: Canned light tuna is a safe choice for everyone. There are no limits on canned light tuna.
3. Do Bugs Need Drugs, Parent Guide: Handwashing [http://www.dobugsneeddrugs.org/parents/parents\\_handwashing.html](http://www.dobugsneeddrugs.org/parents/parents_handwashing.html)
4. Partnership for Food Safety Education, Quick Tips to Packing a Safe School Lunch <http://www.fightbac.org/content/view/full/78/10/>
5. Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Lunch to Go! Food Safety Tips [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/media/nr-rp/2009/2009\\_0819-eng.php](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/media/nr-rp/2009/2009_0819-eng.php)
6. Get the latest food recalls and allergy alerts by email from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Click on: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/recarapp/recaltoce.shtml> and then click on "subscribe to email notifications" at the top of the page
7. Health Canada reminds parents of school lunch allergen safety, Media Release, August 26, 2008 [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/2008/2008\\_148-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/2008/2008_148-eng.php)

For more information, please call Alberta Health Services, Environmental Health Program at 403-943-2288, or click on the Environmental Health website: <http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca/publichealth/envhealth/index.htm>

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