

# Tips On Packing A School Lunch

## USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

**Chill:** When packing food, use an insulated lunchbox or cooler and at least two cold sources, such as freezer packs. Discard any perishable foods that were left at room temperature longer than two hours (one hour in temperatures above 90°F).

### Lunch Packing Tips:

- If the lunch contains perishable food items like luncheon meats, eggs, cheese, or yogurt, make sure to pack it with at least two cold sources, such as freezer packs. Harmful bacteria multiply rapidly so perishable food transported without a cold source won't stay safe long.
- Frozen juice boxes or water can also be used as freezer packs. Freeze these items overnight and use with at least one other freezer pack. By lunchtime, the liquids should be thawed and ready to drink.
- If packing a hot lunch, like soup, chili, or stew, use an insulated container to keep it hot. Fill the container with boiling water, let stand for a few minutes, empty, and then put in the piping hot food. Tell children to keep the insulated container closed until lunchtime to keep the food at 140°F or above.
- If packing a child's lunch the night before, parents should leave it in the refrigerator overnight. The meal will stay cold longer because everything will be refrigerator temperature when it is placed in the lunchbox.

### Eating and Disposal Tips:

- Teach children to properly wash their hands before eating lunch. If running water isn't available, pack disposable wipes for cleaning hands before and after eating.
- After lunch, children should discard all leftover food and used food packaging.
- Clean lunch boxes thoroughly each night with warm soapy water or a disinfectant wipe.