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How to Pack a Safe Lunch



Why do we care how we pack a lunch?

- Packed lunches are often kept at room temperature for 4-6hrs.
- Eating foods that are not packed properly may lead to food poisoning.
- Bacteria thrive in warm, moist foods and may double their numbers every 20 minutes, when temperature is between 90-100 degrees F.
- Bacteria grow rapidly in moist, low-acid foods, such as milk, eggs, meat, poultry, and fish.

Two ways to keep a packed lunch safe to eat!

- 1) Choose foods, which may safely be kept at room temperature.
- 2) Keep the bacteria count low by careful handling of foods.

Foods safe at room temperature for 4 – 6 hours:

- 1) Fresh whole pieces of fruit-apples, oranges, banana, to name a few.
- 2) Dried fruit-boxed raisins, dried apples, dried cherries, apricots...
- 3) Nuts & Peanut butter (Try Soy nut butter or Almond butter for more variety!)
- 4) Fresh, raw veggies! – Carrots, cherry tomatoes, or zucchini sticks.
**Try w/yogurt or dressing kept cold.
- 5) Breads, crackers, pitas, or tortillas – Try Whole Wheat or other “Earthy” Grains.
- 6) Dry or hard cheeses are usually ok. Some yogurt is okay for short periods left at room temperature.
- 7) Canned foods (unopened).
- 8) Beef Jerky or other dried meats (Turkey Jerky – anyone?)

Tips for safe packing:

- *Perishable foods should **NOT** be held at temperatures between 40 – 140 degrees F. for more than 2-3 hrs – including preparation time!
- Most Sandwiches freeze well in freezer bags. Sandwiches will stay cooler longer in the heat!
- Sandwich fillings that freeze well include cheddar cheese, cream cheese (Try reduced fat cheeses to cut calories & fat ☺). Sliced lean meats freeze well. Wrap well!!!
- Chill or freeze juices to pack. Frozen drinks will keep other foods chilled and will be cold when you are ready to drink them.
- Soups, stew, and chili make a hearty lunch. Just remember to heat to boiling and put in a thermos bottle designed for hot foods for safe keeping. Eat 4 – 6 hrs. of packing.