

## Safe Packed Lunches: Teacher's Guide

**Objectives:** To provide information on how to make packed lunches safe, fun, economical, and a convenient way to eat.

Share with participants: ***“Planning healthful packed lunches will make preparing lunches easier and save you money.”***

**Sample ANCHOR questions for participants:**

- ***“Who do you pack lunches for?”***
- ***“Why don’t you make packed lunches?”***
- ***“Why don’t you like packed lunches?”***

If during your discussion involving your ANCHOR questions your participants did not suggest topics they would like to learn about packed lunches you may want to ask: ***“What kind of information would be useful to you or your family to learn about packed lunches?”***

**Background Information** - Choose the appropriate information below to **ADD** to your lesson.

### **Pack Safely**

Wash hands, utensils, and surfaces with hot soapy water before and after food preparation, and especially after preparing meat, poultry, eggs or seafood.

Lunch boxes, laminated totes, and thermos containers should be washed after every use with soapy water and rinsed thoroughly. If a sack lunch is preferred, use only new clean lunch bags. Don’t re-use bags that have carried groceries.

Refrigerate lunches packed the night before. Add foods such as cookies and crackers (that go limp in the refrigerator) and cold drinks before leaving.

### **Safe Foods To Pack**

**Some foods don’t need refrigeration and can be safely packed:**

- Peanut butter sandwich
- Cookies, crackers, and muffins
- Breads and bread products such as bagels, English muffins, and fruit breads
- Dry ready-to-eat cereals, pretzels, popcorn
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Dried fruits such as raisins
- Canned and bottled fruit juices
- Hard cheese
- Jam, jelly and honey
- Unopened cans or ready-to-eat single servings packs of fruit or pudding
- Canned meat, poultry, and fish that can be opened and eaten immediately

## **Keep Cold Foods Cold**

Keep packed lunches cold. Some ways to do this include:

- commercial gel packs
- water frozen in rigid, leak proof plastic container
- ice cubes in a leak proof container
- a frozen juice box
- freeze sandwiches (tomato and lettuce do not freeze well, pack separately)
- use a thermos
- store lunches in a cool place. NEVER leave lunches in direct sun or near a heater.

## **Keep Hot Foods Hot**

To pack hot foods such as soups or baked beans, heat until boiling or steaming, then pack into a thermos designed for hot foods. Rinse the thermos in hot water before placing the food in the thermos.

**FOLLOW THE “TWO-HOUR” RULE** - From the time of preparation to eating, do not leave perishable foods out at room temperature for longer than two hours. Discard any left-over perishable food that has been out longer than two hours. On hot days, your “safe use time” decreases to one hour.

## **Activities (AWAY)**

### **1. Choosing a Safe Lunch Menu**

Display pictures of foods or actual samples of foods that do not require refrigeration.

### **2. Foods Needing Special Attention**

Some foods need to be kept COLD or HOT to keep them safe when being included in a packed lunch.

#### **Display a thermos bottle.**

- Keep hot foods hot. Pour boiling soup, stew, and chili into clean thermos bottle.
- Keep cold foods cold. Many foods you take out of the refrigerator and put into your lunch must be kept cold. Sliced and prepared fresh fruit and vegetables are fine without refrigeration for a couple of hours but stay fresher if kept cool in the lunch box. Other foods that must be kept cold include meat sandwiches, tuna or egg salad sandwiches, milk, yogurt, and fruit from opened cans. Do not pack raw meat, poultry, or fish.
  - a.) Ask participants to name some foods that need to be kept cold. If you have pictures to display that would be better. (Make sure they include the main categories of meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and dairy foods.)
  - b.) Ask participants if they can think of times when some of these foods are not in the refrigerator. (Possible answers: in a packed lunch, in transport from

the grocery store, on a picnic, left on the table after eating, left on the counter after using, left out while watching television.)

- c.) Review the fact that bacteria grow fastest at warm temperatures. Ask participants what they could do to help cold food stay cold. (Possible answers: Put food away as soon as you get home from the store, put food away right after eating a meal, pack cold picnic foods in a cooler with ice, pack a freezer pack in your lunch.)

### 3. **Keeping Cold Food Safe with Freezer/Ice Packs**

When refrigeration isn't possible, there are several ways to keep a lunch cold. Here are some suggestions.

**Display/demonstrate/discuss the different types of freezer packs and how to make a freezer pack.**

- Buy a commercial gel pack. There are several types and sizes available. Some lunch
- Bags now come with freeze-pack inserts.
- Freeze water in a rigid, leak proof plastic freezer container. Be sure to leave room for the water to expand as it freezes.
- Put ice cubes in a leak proof freezer container.
- Use a thermos to keep milk or juice cold until lunchtime.
- Pack a frozen juice box or can of juice. The contents should thaw by lunchtime.
- Freeze the sandwiches. Lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise don't freeze well, so pack them separately to add at lunch time.
- Refrigerate fruit before packing.
- Make sure that cold foods are thoroughly chilled before packing with a freezer pack.
- Pack cold and frozen foods together. This keeps the food colder longer.
- Keep your lunch in the coolest place possible. Avoid leaving it in direct sun or near a heat source.

**Packed Lunch Handouts (AWAY):** *"Kid Approved Packed Lunches"*, *"Pack a Safe Sack Lunch"*, and *"Quick and Easy Packed Lunches"*

**Recipes (AWAY):** *"Sandwiches to Go"*

**For Instructor Use Only - DO NOT DUPLICATE**



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