

## Safe School Lunch Preparation

Whether you're packing lunch or an after-school snack, you don't want bacteria that cause foodborne illnesses to be your child's dining companions.

Shannon Coombs, President of the Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association, offers the following guidelines for packing a safe lunch.

- Make sure your hands, food preparation and eating surfaces, and utensils are clean. Use regular or antibacterial soap and hot water to clean your hands. Use disinfectant products to clean your surfaces to help get rid of bacteria.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly and paper-towel them dry before packing.
- Bacteria grow more slowly on cold items, so anything you can do to make cold foods colder longer is a good thing. Foods should never be left unrefrigerated for more than two hours.
- Kids like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches because of the taste. Parents like this type of lunch because it's easy to make and doesn't require refrigeration. Other food items that fit this description include: uncut fresh fruits and vegetables, hard cheese, unopened canned meat and fish, chips, bread, mustard, pickles, packaged pudding, juice packs, canned fruits and juices, granola, dry cereal, raisins and cookies.
- An insulated lunch box is the best container. If you're packing the lunch in a brown bag, double-bag it for better insulation and add a cold source, such as a cold pack or frozen juice pack.
- Pack hot foods in an insulated thermos so they stay hot until lunchtime. Pre-warm the thermos by filling it with boiling water. Let it stand for a few minutes, then empty out the water and put in the food. Keep the thermos closed until lunchtime.

For more information about cleaning and food safety, check out the CCSPA's website at [www.healthycleaning101.org](http://www.healthycleaning101.org).