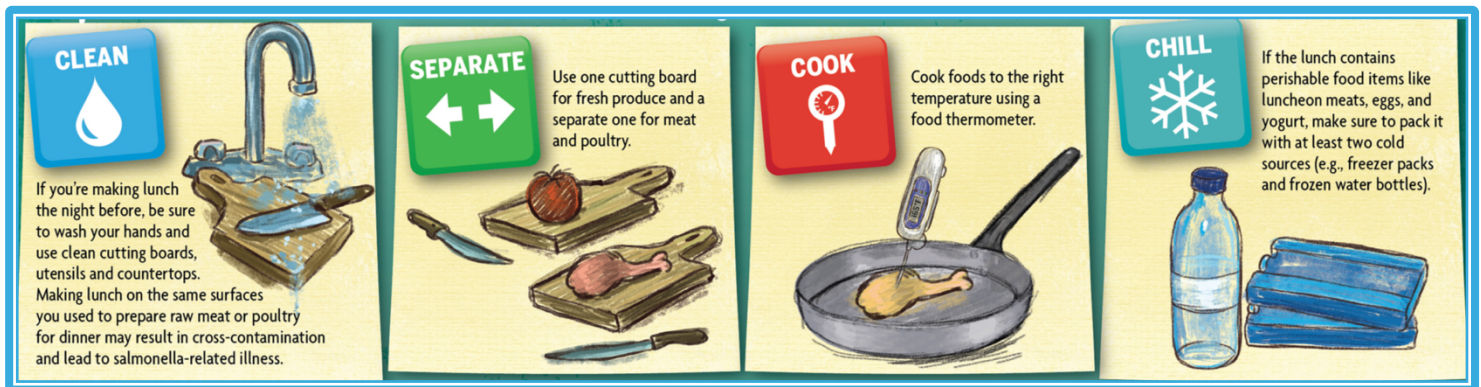


# Food Safety for Packed Lunches

It is great to include a variety of foods in your packed lunch so you get TONS of nutrients. But some packed foods need a little more attention than others. It's all about **Preparation** and the three T's -**Type**, **Time**, and **Temperature** to keep food safe to eat.

## Preparation:

It's important to remember the 4 steps below when preparing food for immediate and later consumption. Always begin with safe foods. Foods that are supposed to be cold should stay cold! Never use perishable items that have been left out at room temperature for more than 2 hours – or 1 hour if temperature is above 90F.



## Type:

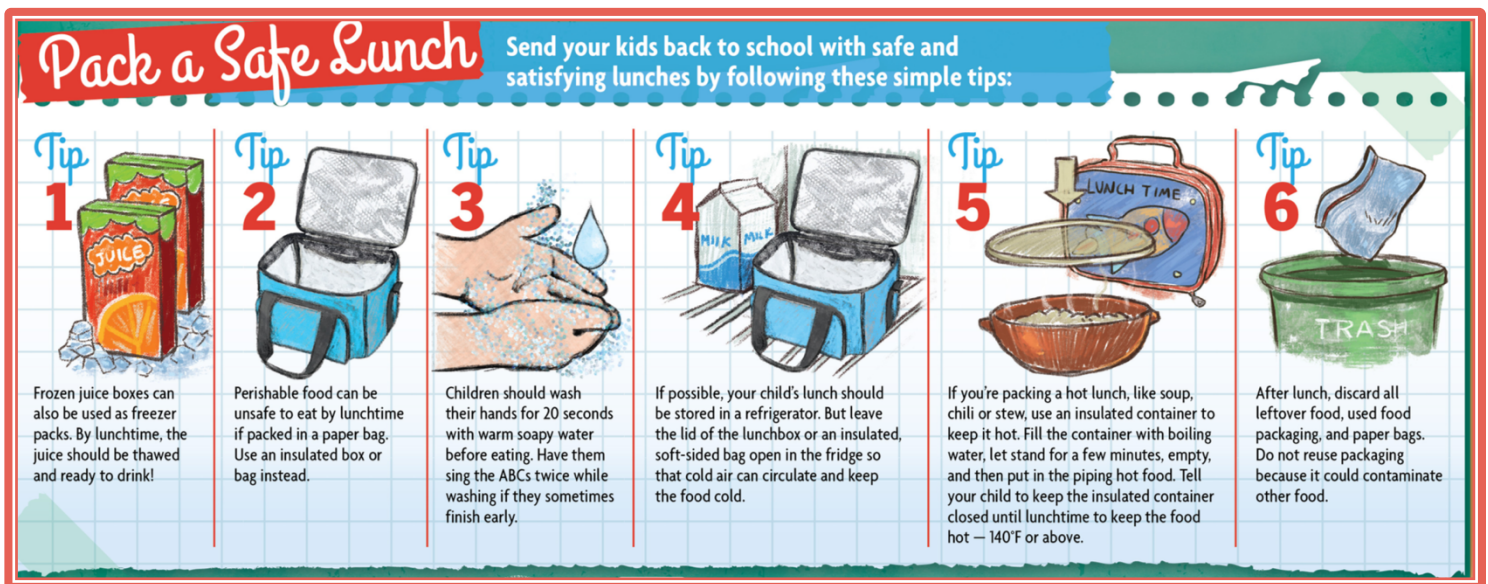
- **Items kept cold:** lunch meats, cooked meat/fish/poultry, eggs, soft cheese, yogurt, milk, pasta salads, peeled or cut fruit and vegetables
  - ✓ Remember to chill thoroughly in the refrigerator until it's time to leave home and pack with two cold sources to avoid growth of bacteria
- **Items kept hot:** soup, chili, or hot combination foods like spaghetti and sauce.
  - ✓ Transport in an insulated thermos to keep foods hot until lunch time.
- **OK at room temperature:** whole fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, hard cheese, nuts, seeds, chips, bread, dry cereal, crackers, peanut butter, jelly, mustard, pickles, unopened fruit cup, unopened canned/pouch fish
  - ✓ No refrigeration required

## Time:

- **Two-hour rule:** perishable foods (meat, fish, poultry, dairy, eggs) should be eaten within 2 hours if they are not kept hot or cold enough with a thermos or ice packs

## Temperature:

- **40-140 degrees Fahrenheit = “Danger Zone”** → at these temperatures, bacteria that contribute to food poisoning can grow quickly
  - ✓ After food leaves your refrigerator, it can enter the temperature danger zone within 2 hours if not stored properly with an ice source
  - ✓ Always make sure to use an insulated lunch box and pack at least two ice packs to keep your perishable foods cold enough until lunch time
  - ✓ Hot food (soup, chili, stew) should be kept hot (above 140 degrees Fahrenheit) in an insulated container until lunch time.
  - ✓ Don't peek in the container until lunch. *If you're lookin', it's not cookin'!*



## Pro Tips to Being a Germ Buster

- Always wash hands before eating - pack a sanitation wipe to encourage and remind kids to clean hands first.
- Every Friday wash out lunch box with warm water and soap or clean out with a disinfectant wipe of your choice.
- A frozen water bottle can double as an ice pack and will be ready to drink by lunch time.

**Resources:** [www.foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

**Info-graphics:** [https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/keeping-bag-lunches-safe/ct\\_index](https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/keeping-bag-lunches-safe/ct_index)