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Back to School Time in Michigan, Parents Are Encouraged to Follow Food Safety Tips When Packing School Lunches

LANSING – It’s “back to school” time in Michigan! And, the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) Is encouraging parents to follow some basic food safety guidelines when packing their child’s lunch ensuring a foodborne illness doesn’t make its way into a child’s lunchbox.

How to make sure your lunch is safe:

- Put something cold in the lunch box. A fun trick is to freeze a juice box overnight and put it right next to a sandwich. This ensures the sandwich won’t get too warm and your child still has a cold drink at lunchtime! If you don’t want to take a juice box, a small, plastic refrigerator container filled with water and put into the freezer the night before will work too.
- Freeze your sandwiches. This works better with coarse-textured breads that won't get soggy when they thaw. The sandwich will be thawed by the time you eat lunch, and it keeps everything else in the lunch box cold. (If your child likes lettuce, tomato and mayonnaise, pack those separately. They don’t freeze well, and your child may not like the taste when it thaws.)
- Rinse fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Dry with a paper towel.
- Use a thermos to keep milk or juice cold until lunchtime. Some juices don’t even need to be refrigerated.
- Remind your child to keep his/her lunch in the coolest place possible. If the school has a refrigerator, put it in there.
- Always keep it clean. Show children how to wash their hands with warm, soapy water before they eat, which is even more critical to help stop the transmission of disease like influenza.

For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/foodsafety or www.foodsafety.gov, or call the U.S. Food and Drug Administration Food Information Line at 888-SAFE-FOOD or contact your local Michigan State University Extension office.

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