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10 Mind-Easing Ways To Make Sure Your Child's "Bag" Lunch Is Safe

By Terry Nicholls

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by: **Terry Nicholls**

Perishable food must be kept cold while commuting via bus, bicycle, on foot, in a car, or on the subway. After arriving at school or work, perishable food must be kept cold until lunchtime.

Why? Harmful bacteria multiply rapidly in the "danger zone" (the temperatures between 40° F and 140° F). So, perishable food transported without an ice source won't stay safe long. Here are safe handling recommendations to prevent food-borne illness from "bag" lunches.

1. Perishable food, such as raw or cooked meat and poultry, must be kept cold or frozen at the store and at home. Eggs should be purchased cold at the store and kept cold at home.

2. Transport perishable food as fast as possible when no ice source is available. At the destination, keep it cold. Food should not be left out at room temperature more than 2 hours (1 hour if the temperature is above 90° F).

3. Prepackaged combos that contain luncheon meats along with crackers, cheese, and condiments must also be kept refrigerated. This includes luncheon meats and smoked ham which are cured or contain preservatives.

4. At lunchtime, discard all used food packaging and paper bags. Do not reuse packaging because it could contaminate other food and cause food-borne illness.

5. Pack just the amount of perishable food that can be eaten at lunch. That way, there won't be a problem about the storage or safety of leftovers.

6. It's fine to prepare the food the night before and store the packed lunch in the refrigerator. Freezing sandwiches helps them stay cold. However, for best quality don't freeze sandwiches containing mayonnaise, lettuce, or tomatoes. Add these later.

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7. Insulated, soft-sided lunch boxes or bags are best for keeping food cold, but metal or plastic lunch boxes and paper bags can also be used. If using paper lunch bags, create layers by double bagging to help insulate the food. An ice source should be packed with perishable food in any type of lunch bag or box.

8. Prepare cooked food, such as turkey, ham, chicken, and vegetable or pasta salads, ahead of time to allow for thorough chilling in the refrigerator. Divide large amounts of food into shallow containers for fast chilling and easier use. Keep cooked food refrigerated until time to leave home.

10. To keep lunches cold away from home, include a small frozen gel pack or frozen juice box. Of course, if there's a refrigerator available, store perishable items there upon arrival.

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Terry Nicholls is the author of the eBook "Food Safety: Protecting Your Family From Food Poisoning". For more tips like these, and to learn more about his book, visit his website at

Ten Things You Should Know Before Buying

By Michelle Andrews

Your young child's playtime is his first real learning experience, and toys can act as catalysts in your child's growth. The benefits of educational toys are many and varied, and by choosing the right toys, you create an environment that is fun and conducive to learning vital skills.

But currently it is hard to find what you need if you do not know what you are looking for. With a million toys on the market today, it is tough to pick out the best combinations of fun and learning. However, every beneficial toy should be fun, safe, and help the child develop and exercise some skill. When faced with so many choices, asking yourself some simple questions about your child's development can help you make the best selection.

The following is a list of characteristics you should look for in a good, educational toy:

1.Sensory attraction: How many senses will the toy occupy? Does it respond to and with lights, sounds, or movement? Is it colorful? Does it have a smell or a texture?

2.Activation method: Will the toy provide a challenge without frustrating your child? Will it be a fun and rewarding experience?

3.Self-expression: Will the toy allow your child to express himself, be creative, and make choices?

4.Success potential: How many "correct" ways are there to play with the toy? Can play be open-ended with no right or wrong responses? Will the toy adapt to your child's ability and style?

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5.Ways of use: Can the toy be used in many different positions? Can it be used in different kinds of play?

6.Popularity: Is it a popular toy? Can it be tied–in with other media such as storybooks, television or movies?

7.Flexibility: Does it have adjustable volume, speed, and level of difficulty?

8.Opportunities for interaction: Does the toy provide a chance for you or other children to be involved? Will it build social skills?

9.Individuality and growth: Will the toy engage your child in activities that indicate the child's developmental age and growth? Does it reflect the child's interests?

10.Safety and durability: Is the toy durable, considering your child's age and strength? Is it safe?

So, giving your child the right toys will be benefit for all. Your child's play time is not only a time of fun and development for them, but can also be a great way for you to relax and enjoy your child's company. With educational toys, you can follow, supervise and direct your child's development, and find great thrill and amusement in their playtime activities.

Michelle Andrews, a former middle school teacher who now stays home with his three children. He wrote "Parent's Guide on How to Raise a Smart Child by Choosing the Right Educational Toys." Visit his Website EducationaltoysGuide.com at

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