

Food safety after school

ST CLOUD, Minn. (9/21/2015) Where is the first place kids go when they get home from school? The kitchen. They rummage through the cupboards and refrigerator seeking a snack. The kitchen is not always the safest place if kids become ill from the food they eat. Children under age 15 are at a higher risk for foodborne illness as their immune system is not as developed as an adult's.

When heading to after school snack time, kids can help prevent foodborne illness by following these guidelines:

- Place backpacks, books, and sports equipment on the floor or designated area. They carry germs that we don't want on the table or counters where food is prepared.
- Clean out lunch boxes and throw away 'refrigerator type' foods, such as sandwiches, yogurt tubes, cheese sticks that are left over from lunch.
- Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before food preparation and eating.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables with running water before you eat them.
- Do not eat bread or soft fruits or vegetables with mold or that are bruised.
- Unbaked cookie dough may contain raw eggs and is not to be eaten.
- Hot dogs need to be cooked not eaten from the package.
- Milk, lunch meat, hardcooked eggs, yogurt or cheese needs to be quickly put back in the refrigerator.
- Don't eat perishable food like pizza or leftovers left out of the refrigerator more than 2 hours.

Are your children allowed to use the microwave after school? If so, teach them personal and food safety microwave practices:

- Teach them to read and follow the microwave instructions on the package.
- Supply them with microwave-safe cookware, not metal, foil or plastic tubs and cartons that could spark, overheat or melt.
- Make pot holders available and instruct kids how to use them. Be sure they understand how to remove food from the microwave and that steam can burn!
- Instruct children on the importance of stirring all hot drinks and soups before tasting to make sure they don't burn their mouth.

As September is National Food Safety Month and the beginning of a new school year, it's a great time to teach children good after school food safety practices!

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