



**Media Contact:**

Beth Strautz for STOP Foodborne Illness  
(773) 895-5387, bstrautz@vagusagency.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**STOP FOODBORNE ILLNESS FOCUSES ON PACKING SAFE SCHOOL LUNCHES  
FOR NATIONAL FOOD SAFETY MONTH IN SEPTEMBER**

*Award-Winning Food Safety Advocate and Father  
Offers Simple Tips to Make Lunchtime Safer*

CHICAGO (Aug. 24, 2015) – With the back-to-school season coinciding with National Food Safety Month in September, STOP Foodborne Illness, ([www.stopfoodborneillness.org](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org)), the leading national advocate for safe food, is shining the spotlight on ways to keep school lunches safe and kids healthy. Darin Detwiler, Sr. Policy Coordinator of STOP Foodborne Illness, knows from personal tragedy that children can be more vulnerable to foodborne illness than adults: Darin lost his young son from *E. coli* O157:H7 in 1993. Since then Darin has worked tirelessly to improve the safety of the U.S. food supply as an FDA Certified Food Science Educator recognized by four different Secretaries of Agriculture for his efforts in consumer education, and served two appointments on the USDA’s National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection.

“When packed lunches sit outside of a refrigerator for several hours, we call it the ‘danger zone’ – temperatures between 41 – 135 degrees Fahrenheit – which creates prime conditions for bacteria to grow that can make kids sick,” said Darin Detwiler, Sr. Policy Coordinator of STOP Foodborne Illness. “I know it takes a lot of effort to plan and pack a lunch every day, but with a few steps, parents and kids can make safe lunches part of their daily routine.”

**STOP Foodborne Illness - Guidelines for Packing Safe School Lunches**

- **Insulate.** Insulated lunch bags and boxes are one of the best ways to keep foods from entering the bacteria “danger zone” (between 41 and 135 degrees Fahrenheit).

- **Freeze drinks before packing.** Frozen juice boxes or water bottles help keep lunches cold and are drinkable by lunchtime. A reusable frozen ice pack works just as well.
- **Pack hot foods while still hot.** Don't wait for hot foods to cool down before packing; this puts them in the temperature "danger zone" where bacteria multiply. Instead, when packing soup, chili or stew, use an insulated thermos and fill it up while food is still hot, or simmering. You also can preheat your thermos by filling it with boiling water, let sit for a few minutes before pouring out the water and then adding your hot food.
- **Include room-temperature-safe foods.** Some foods don't need to be refrigerated to be eaten safely at lunchtime. Peanut butter, jelly, cookies, crackers, chips, dried fruits and whole fruits (apples, bananas, and oranges) can be eaten safely at room temperature. If opened right at lunchtime, canned meats and fish are safe at room temperature, too.
- **Wash hands before preparing food and eating.** One of the best safety lessons parents can teach their children is the habit of washing hands before and after meals and snacks. Make sure both parents and children use water and soap, and rub hands together vigorously for at least 20 seconds and dry hands with a one-use towel. If water isn't available before and after lunchtime, hand sanitizer or moist hand towelettes are the next-best alternative.
- **Throw out leftovers.** It's tempting to save leftover food children bring home, but remember that it's been sitting out for up to eight hours, so toss it to be safe, plus clean and sanitize the reusable containers. The exception is unopened, room-temperature-safe foods.

For National Food Safety Month, STOP Foodborne Illness will also be offering food safety tips for pregnant women, mothers with young children, and seniors. For more food safety tips please visit [www.stopfoodborneillness.org](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org). If you think you have been sickened from food, please contact STOP Foodborne Illness' helpline (1-800-350-STOP) which helps foodborne illness victims navigate the health system to figure out what they have, where it might have come from, and what to do next.

# # #

### **About STOP Foodborne Illness**

STOP Foodborne Illness (STOP) is a national, nonprofit, public health organization dedicated to preventing illness and death from foodborne pathogens. STOP achieves its mission by

advocating for sound public policies, building public awareness and assisting those impacted by foodborne illness. [www.stopfoodborneillness.org](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org).