

# QUICK FACTS: SAFE SCHOOL LUNCHES FOR KIDS

In 1997, 153 cases of Hepatitis A were reported in Michigan. One hundred fifty-one of those were students or staff of schools in four different districts. An 11-year-old girl, Lindsay, endured health problems and horrific pain after eating strawberry dessert served at her school. No child should ever have this kind of experience! While it's not 100% infallible, there are things that parents and kids can do to mitigate the risks of food poisoning at school (and at home).

**Read Stop's fact sheet about food safety for kids: *Rylee & Rusty discuss food safety***

## Know and use these kid-friendly food safety tips:

- **Always wash your hands:** Before and after eating or handling food.
- **Know the truth:** The 5-second "rule" is a myth. Food that touches the floor (where everybody walks, including pets) needs to be thrown away, not put in your mouth.
- **Avoid the bare tabletop:** You don't know who or what was sitting there before you, so put your food on a plate or napkin.
- **Know what spoiled food looks like:** If vegetables/fruits are wilting, moldy, discolored, wrinkly, or squishy it's more than likely not something you want to eat. Bruising, however, is typically caused by handling, not spoilage, so you can cut around a bruise and still enjoy the fruit.
- **Know what undercooked meat looks like:** If a hamburger or chicken is raw/pink inside, you shouldn't eat it. If it's still cold or frozen inside, you shouldn't eat it.
- **Report unsanitary conditions:** Most people don't want to "cause trouble", so it's doubly important that children know it's okay to say something if they see cafeteria workers not wearing gloves or hairnets, or wearing gloves but touching their faces. Yellowish water flowing from the drinking fountain, equipment or surfaces that are sticky or dirty, and bugs or rodents roaming around are the types of things one should speak up about. These kinds of conditions are not healthy, and they should report it to a trusted school authority ASAP.

## Visit the Cafeteria

Request to make a personal visit to your child's school cafeteria to speak with the food service director and have a look around. Most schools welcome involvement from knowledgeable parents.

If becoming an advocate for improved school food safety practices appeals to you, start by reviewing this **FREE Food-Safe Schools Action Guide\*** published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It's an excellent resource for school nutrition directors, and other school community partners, including parents! This guide brings together specific aspects of food safety that need to be considered when serving food in schools. It'll help you learn about regulations, know which questions to ask, and how to take action for change.

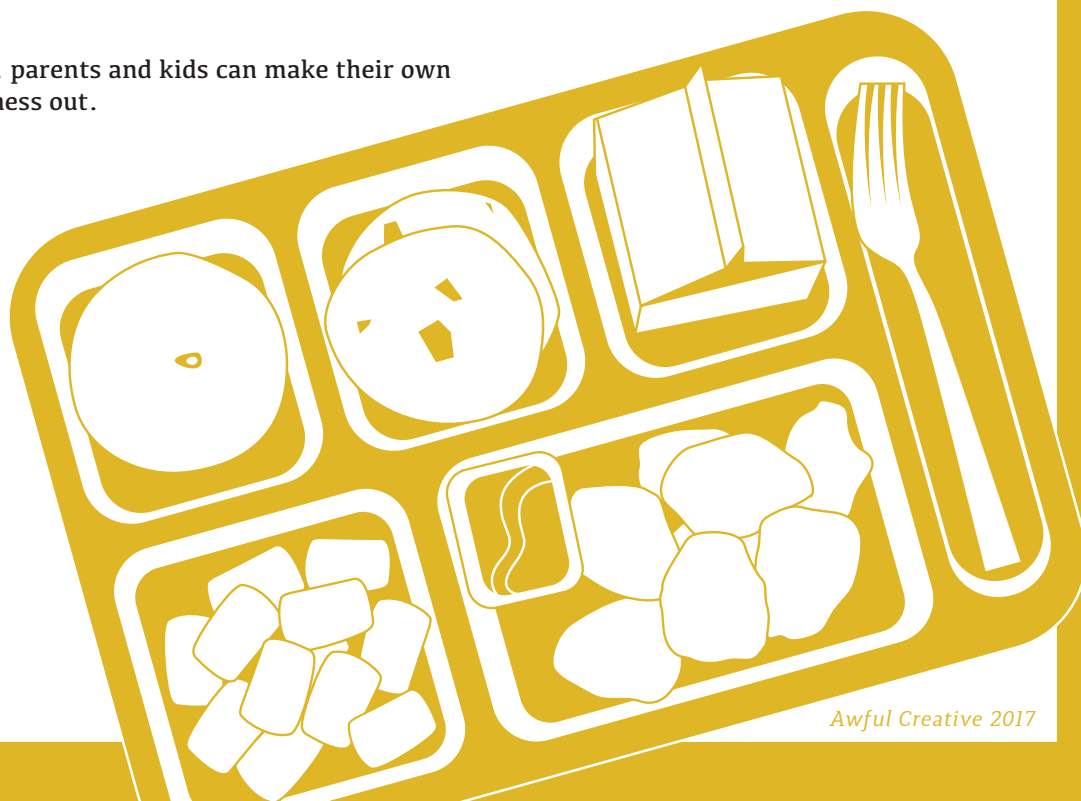
\*[www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Food-Safe-Schools-Action-Guide.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/Food-Safe-Schools-Action-Guide.pdf)

## Pack your own lunch

With a little planning and creativity, parents and kids can make their own lunches while keeping foodborne illness out.

See **Quick Facts:**

**Brown Bag It + Pack a Safer Lunch**



[stopfoodborneillness.org](http://stopfoodborneillness.org)

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# QUICK FACTS: PETS ARE LIKE FAMILY TOO

## Just like us, pets are at risk of food poisoning.

Statistically speaking, we don't have an accurate idea as to how many pets get sick from contaminated pet food each year. However, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has estimated that of the approximately 70M dogs and 74M cats in the US, 11M+ dogs and 12M+ cats get sick every year from a food-related illness.

If you're a pet owner, you probably treat your furry friend like a family member. Here are some good ideas to help you keep your pet from facing a foodborne illness.

### Good Idea for minimizing risk:

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water before and after touching pet food.
- Clean food and water dishes after each feeding.
- Use a clean scoop to transfer food out of bags and containers to dishes.
- Throw away spoiled or old pet food. Tie the plastic bag so it's more difficult to get into.

### Good Idea for staying informed:

- Sign up to receive pet food recall emails from the AVMA here: <http://bit.ly/petfoodrecalls>
- If your pet's food is recalled, take quick action to discard all of it, from your supply and from your pet's food bowls.
- If your pet is already sick, you may want to keep some of the tainted food for possible testing later. Handle it with care by washing your hands before and after, and by clearly labeling what it is. Discard the rest.
- Report a pet food complaint to the FDA here: <https://www.safetyreporting.hhs.gov/> Have as much information on hand as possible.

## Symptoms To Watch For

When a dog or cat (or other pet) falls ill with a foodborne illness, they usually have these symptoms:

- Diarrhea (including blood or mucus)
- Vomiting
- Lethargy
- Dehydration

Sometimes, though, pets are carriers without showing symptoms. They shed the pathogen in their stools or harbor it in their saliva or on their fur. That's why it's important to remember that you and your family, especially children, can become sick from tainted pet food, too. Humans are at risk when they handle contaminated pet food or have contact with an infected animal.

### Good Idea for protecting yourself:

The best protection is diligent, thorough hand washing after petting and touching pets, serving or handling pet food, or any contact with pet waste. Because children 5 and under are especially susceptible to foodborne illness, they should be kept away from feeding areas at all times. And, don't let them touch or eat pet food.

See **Quick Facts: Wash Your Hands**

For symptoms of foodborne illness in humans:

[www.stopfoodborneillness.org/awareness/to-do-if-youre-sick/](http://www.stopfoodborneillness.org/awareness/to-do-if-youre-sick/)

## If Your Pet is Sick

If you suspect you have food poisoning, seek immediate medical attention.

If your cat or dog is showing symptoms of a foodborne illness, call your vet right away for immediate examination and treatment.

