

For Immediate Release

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## **Healthy Back to School Basics with Quick Lunch Lessons** ***Important Tips for Safe Lunches and Snacks***

August 16, 2007 – Washington, D.C. – Kids head back to school this month, and parents have enough to take care of without worrying about the safety of food brought from home. Fortunately, parents and kids can take a few easy steps to minimize their risk of contracting foodborne illness.

September marks the start of the school year and National Food Safety Education month. In support, the non-profit Partnership for Food Safety Education (PFSE) offers the following easy tips to ensure this time of year is as happy and healthy as possible, and to combat the estimated 76 million cases of foodborne illness that affects Americans annually (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data):

### **Quick Lunch Lessons from Fight BAC!®:**

- Always wash your hands. Use soap and warm water for 20 seconds before and after handling food and eating. Encourage kids to sing the “Happy Birthday” song twice as they wash up.
- Rinse fresh whole fruits and vegetables under running tap water before packing them into a lunch.
- Keep hot foods hot, cold foods cold. Use an insulated lunch box, insulated bottles for hot foods, and freezer packs or solid frozen juice boxes for cold foods. Perishable food such as meat, poultry, or egg sandwiches not eaten at lunchtime should be discarded.
- Chill it. If lunch is made the night before, keep it in the refrigerator until it’s time to pack and go. Foods should never be left un-refrigerated for more than two hours. Keep your refrigerator temperature at 40°F or below—use a refrigerator thermometer to be sure.

When choosing food for school lunches or after-school snacks, use food safety smarts.

**Shop Smarts from Fight BAC!®:**

- Choose pasteurized milk and juice. Pasteurization significantly reduces the risk of foodborne illness. Juice that has not been pasteurized is sold in some grocery stores, health food stores, cider mills and farm markets and must carry a warning that it has not been pasteurized. Double check to be sure you include only pasteurized milk or juice in your child's lunch box.
- Check for bruised or damaged fresh fruits and vegetables. Buy those that have the least damage. That's where pests and bacteria can more easily reside.
- Choose only refrigerated fresh-cut fruits and vegetables. Don't buy fresh-cut items that are not refrigerated.
- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from household chemicals and raw foods such as meat, poultry and seafood—when they're in the cart, at checkout, and when bagged.
- Luncheon meat should be consumed within 3-5 days once opened. Unopened luncheon meat can be kept refrigerated for up to two weeks unless advised differently by the manufacturer.

Additional food safety tips, downloadable activities for kids and interactive games are available on the fully searchable [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) . Visit [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) today to learn how you can become a BAC! Fighter and join in the effort to prevent foodborne illness in your home and community.

*The Partnership for Food Safety Education unites industry associations, professional societies in food science, nutrition and health, consumer groups and the United States Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency and from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration, to educate the public about safe food handling and preparation. The Partnership, a non-profit organization, is the creator and steward of the Fight BAC!® campaign, a food safety education program developed using scientifically based recommendations and resulting from an extensive consumer research process. Fight BAC!® materials are fully accessible online at [www.fightbac.org](http://www.fightbac.org) and utilized by consumers, teachers, dietitians, public*

*health officials and extension agents across the United States.*

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