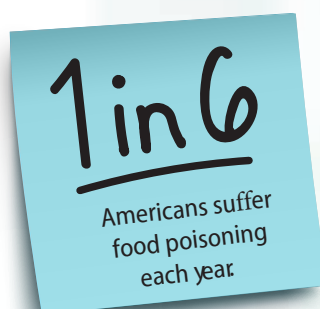# Out of the Box

Preparing safe lunches can prevent food-borne illness.

For many parents, "back to school" means back to packing lunches. With National Food Safety Education Month coming up in September, here are tips to pack safe lunches for school and work — and what can happen if they're not so safe.

Why packing safely is important

1 in 6 Americans suffer food poisoning each year.

Almost 50% of annual salmonella infections occur in infants and school-age children.

Follow these tips for a tasty and safe lunch

Keep It Clean. When making lunches, a vital ingredient is cleanliness. Start by washing your hands, then keep surfaces clean and avoid cross-contamination.

Be Picky. When choosing what to pack, consider the environment. A packed lunch is not the place for sushi or a homemade Caesar dressing with raw yolks.

Pack Right. Just as at home, foods need to be stored appropriately. Pack hot foods in a thermos. Cold foods need frozen water bottles or gel packs with them.

Trash It. You might be tempted to have your leftover lunch for dinner. But when food has been in a lunchbox all day, that could be risky. Throw it away instead.

Wash It Out. Clean your lunchbox or softside container with soapy water after every use, and remember to dry it thoroughly to prevent mold.