

Food

BROWN BAGGING IT

By Ellen Schuster, Home Economist
Cooperative Extension Service

That "flu bug" you and the kids caught last week may have gone to work or school in a lunch box.

It may have actually been food poisoning.

Flu and food poisoning have the same symptoms — cramps, diarrhea, vomiting and fever. Only thorough medical tests can determine which is which.

The important thing to remember is that food poisoning can be prevented.

Don't take chances.

Taking a few simple precautions can save you and your family a lot of agony.

First, cook food thoroughly. If it's meant to be hot, keep it hot. If it's meant to be cold, keep it cold. Bacteria thrive at temperatures between 60 and 125 degrees F. Food held in this temperature zone for more than two or three hours, including preparation time, is unsafe.

Second, keep utensils and countertops clean. Wash them thoroughly with soap and hot water. The same goes for your hands. If you have cuts or sores, use rubber gloves.

The vacuum bottle is a good way to keep certain foods hot or cold. However, wash and rinse them in boiling water after each use. To prevent breakage, be sure to cool the bottle before adding cold foods and fill with hot water for a few minutes before adding hot foods.

Soups, stews and chili can be a welcome lunch on a cool day. If these products are boiling; hot when poured into a sterile vacuum bottle, you shouldn't have any problem with them at all.

Use tongs or a fork to place meat, poultry and cheese into containers or sandwiches. Fingers spread bacteria.

Certain types of sandwiches freeze well although you may experience some loss of quality. Frozen sandwiches thaw in time for lunch and also help keep the rest of the lunch cold.

Do not freeze lettuce

or other greens. Pack them separately so they can be added to the sandwich at lunch time. If you use a moist sandwich spread, a thin layer of margarine on the bread will keep it from getting soggy.

Tuna, chicken, egg and other salads mixed with commercial mayonnaise are safe if the food is carefully prepared and kept cool until lunch time. There is some evidence that commercial mayonnaise may actually help prohibit the growth of toxic bacteria. However, there is no substitute for careful preparation and storage. Use of homemade mayonnaise for

packed lunches that will not be refrigerated is not recommended.

Raw fruits and vegetables should be clean and well scrubbed.

Lunchboxes, rather than paper sacks are a good idea. The insulated ones hold the cold much better than paper bags. Plus, the box is easy to keep clean.

If you do use the familiar brown bags, however, buy them specifically for lunches and use them only once. Reused lunch or other bags are subject to contamination from food leakage, insects, etc.

Here are some recipes recommended for "brown bag" lunches.

CRUNCHY TUNA

To save time in the morning, prepare filling the night before and refrigerate. Carrot and celery make the filling crunchy.

1 7-oz. can water-packed tuna, drained and flaked
1/4 cup coarsely grated carrot
1/4 cup chopped cucumber or celery
1/4 cup mayonnaise
Few grains of pepper
Rye or other bread

In medium-sized bowl mix all ingredients except bread with a fork. Sandwich between slices of rye bread. Makes 1 1/2 cups salad, enough for 5 sandwiches. Per sandwich: 158 calories, 11 grams protein, 10 grams fat, 8 grams carbohydrate.

CORN SQUARES

Ham and cheese give extra nutrition to this all-time favorite. Individual squares, wrapped and frozen, can go right from freezer to lunch box. They'll thaw just in time for lunch!

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup yellow cornmeal
4 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup milk
3 large eggs
1/3 cup butter or margarine, melted
3/4 cup finely chopped ham (about 3 ozs.)
3/4 cup coarsely grated sharp Cheddar cheese (about 3 ozs.)
1/4 cup chopped green pepper

Heat oven to 400° F. Grease a 9-inch square baking pan. In a medium-sized bowl mix flour, cornmeal, baking powder and salt. In a separate bowl whisk milk, eggs and butter with a fork; add to flour mixture. Stir just to combine; batter will be lumpy. Gently stir in ham, cheese and green pepper. Spread evenly in prepared pan. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, until golden brown and a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean. Remove from oven and place pan on a wire rack to cool at least 10 minutes. Run knife around edge to loosen and then remove bread from pan. Cut into 9 servings and wrap individually before packing. Makes 9 servings.

Per serving: 266 calories, 10 grams protein, 15 grams fat, 23 grams carbohydrate.

PROTECTING FOOD FROM NUTRIENT LOSS

When do you think fruits and vegetables are most likely to lose nutrients? When they are picked? While they sit on store shelves?

Actually, the greatest loss of nutrients occurs during preparation at home.

Here are some suggestions on how you can conserve nutrients.

First, store fruits and vegetables properly. This means refrigerating foods that need it as soon as possible. Special areas in the refrigerators are designed for fruits and vegetables and should be used for that purpose. This compartment will help slow the deterioration process.

When preparing fruits and vegetables, use a sharp blade. A dull cutting edge increases the chance of bruising which will lead to a vitamin loss.

Foods should also be used as soon as possible after they are cut up. Prolonged exposure of cut up food will also increase nutrient loss.

When cooking vege-

tables, use as little water as possible and cook only until tender. Recapture the vitamins lost in cooking by adding the vegetable water to soups, gravies and sauces. Use a steaming basket if possible. Vitamin C is easily leached out by cooking water and can be weakened by exposure to air.

Vegetables will also retain more nutrients if they are cooked in larger pieces.

The best way to get the full nutritional value out of fruits and vegetables is to eat them raw.

Other foods are also subject to nutrient loss during preparation. Vitamin losses in meats are

related to how you cook them. To keep tenderness, juiciness and nutrients, cook them quickly at moderate temperatures. Heat destroys some B vitamins, but the protein value is not lost in cooking.

Eggs will retain most of their nutrients whether they are boiled, poached or fried.

The nutrients in rice and pasta products literally go down the drain when you rinse them before or after cooking.

For more information on food storage and preparation, call the Clark County Cooperative Extension Service at 731-3130.

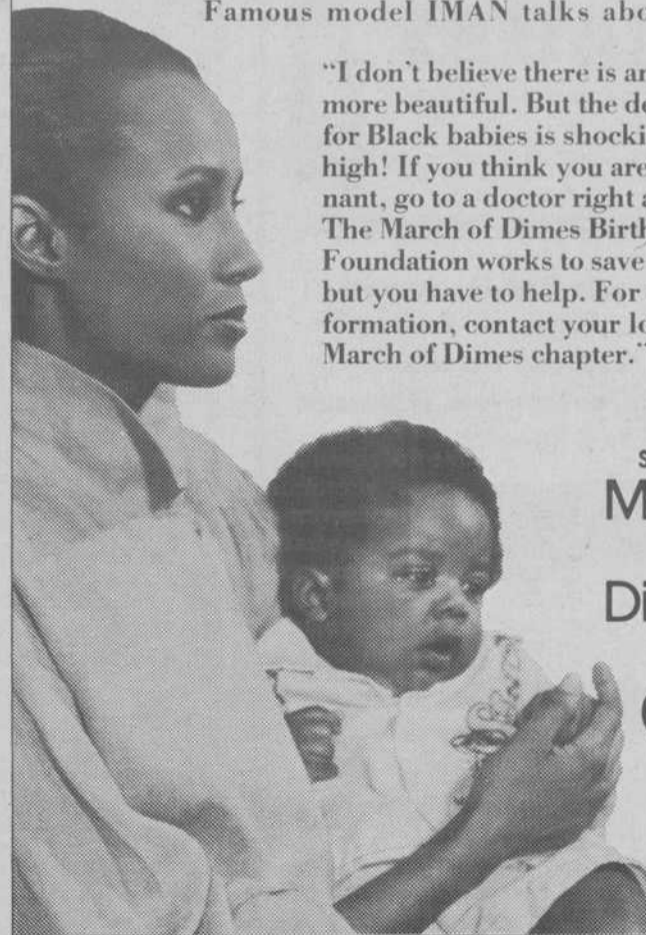
**HAVE YOU
REGISTERED
TO VOTE?
DO IT NOW!**

SAVING BABIES...

Famous model IMAN talks about babies:

"I don't believe there is anything more beautiful. But the death rate for Black babies is shockingly high! If you think you are pregnant, go to a doctor right away. The March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation works to save babies, but you have to help. For more information, contact your local March of Dimes chapter."

Support
**March
of
Dimes**



THIS SPACE CONTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLISHER