

## A Warm Lunch, Without the Microwave

Many kids enjoy a warm lunch, but there are safety and staffing concerns that cause childcare centers to have to say no to microwaving and otherwise heating foods.

According to the FDA:

In most cases, it's safe to mix formula using ordinary cold tap water that's brought to a boil and then boiled for one minute and cooled. According to the World Health Organization, recent studies suggest that mixing powdered formula with water at a temperature of at least 70 degree C—158 degrees F—creates a high probability that the formula will not contain the bacterium *Enterobacter sakazakii*—a rare cause of bloodstream and central nervous system infections. Remember that formula made with hot water needs to be cooled quickly to body temperature—about 98 degrees F—if it is being fed to the baby immediately. If the formula is not being fed immediately, refrigerate it right away and keep refrigerated until feeding. (<http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm048694.htm>)

(Bottled water should follow the same treatment process unless it is FDA approved as sterile.)

This method of heating/cooling water is time consuming for staff members who would otherwise be attending to your children. Even with a floating staff member between the infant and toddler classrooms during the busiest times of the day, this staff member is dedicated to all 9 of those children and their teachers for diaper changes, toileting, and the consistent hand washing routines required by our childcare license. We also do not pay for gas stove usage in our current 5 year lease.

Microwaves present other challenges. According to Harvard Health Publications:

When food is wrapped in plastic or placed in a plastic container and microwaved, substances used in manufacturing the plastic (plasticizers) may leak into the food. In particular, fatty foods such as meats and cheeses cause a softening agent called diethylhexyl adipate to leach out. ([http://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/HEALTHbeat\\_081606.htm](http://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/HEALTHbeat_081606.htm))

While the author, Dr. Anthony Komaroff, reports that some plastic containers are considered microwave safe by the FDA, we as a childcare team are not able to police this health and safety issue on a daily basis. We also feel that the amount of time it would take for staff to heat foods for all children would be unreasonable in taking away from the supervision necessary at lunch times. Choosing to heat foods also presents burn hazards, since microwaved containers are often cooler than their contents and must be tested using an instant-read thermometer. We hope you understand our position on these liabilities.

So, what do we recommend? We'd love to see your children enjoying warm meals and bottles. Please consider these options:

Infants: Bottle and jar warmers are an in-classroom option that we happily accept - Try these brands, with reviews available on Amazon.com:

- ❖ Dr. Brown's Bottle Warmer (4 star review)
- ❖ First Years Babypro Quick Serve Bottle Warmer (3 ½ star review)
- ❖ AVENT Express Food and Bottle Warmer (3 ½ star review)

Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers: Consider heating food at home in a pan on the stove, or in an FDA approved microwavable container, then storing the food at a safe temperature in these containers, which are available on Amazon.com:

- ❖ Foogo Thermoses - Leak-proof, keeps food at temperature for up to 6 hours according to reviews.
- ❖ Thermos Element - (4 star review)
- ❖ Check out other options at Amazon.com and Google Marketplace for more customer reviews.