

FOOD IN SCHOOLS DURING COVID-19

This guidance document provides recommendations to reduce the risk of infection while maximizing student and staff health and ensuring continued delivery of food-related components of the Ontario curriculum. Below are guidelines to consider as schools plan for re-opening during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff and Student Eating Times and Locations

- Designated areas should be assigned for eating lunches and snacks.
 - Select student eating locations that maintain cohorts and maximize physical distance as much as possible. Remove all furniture not in use to maximize space, movement and to adhere to physical distancing.
 - Staff rooms should ensure physical distancing of 2 metres/6 feet space for seating. In staff rooms, consider walkways and ensure adequate spacing during walking.
 - Ensure appropriate signage and use of floor markers to direct flow of traffic, including entrances and exits to staffing area.
- Staff and students should perform hand hygiene before and after eating. Ensure access to handwashing using soap and paper towels or provide liquid hand-sanitizer with 60% alcohol content.
- Staff and students must be seated while eating.
- Eating surfaces (tabletops) should be cleaned and sanitized before and after eating food.
- Student use of microwaves and multi-use appliances, utensils, etc. must be avoided.
- There should be a cleaning and sanitation plan for appliances, shared and common surfaces, utensils, handles, dishwasher, etc. used by staff.
- Once seated, masks/face coverings can be removed to eat food. If there is a need to stand or leave eating area, students and staff should wear their mask/face covering.
- Allow enough eating time for students and staff to feel relaxed and enjoy food. A minimum of 25 minutes is recommended.
- Limit distractions such as screens, devices, etc.
- Staff or students who leave for lunch, should follow appropriate hand-hygiene protocols upon return.
- Ensure plans are in place for managing food waste including daily cleaning and sanitation of commonly used bins/containers.

Instructional-Based Food Use

Students and staff involved in instructional-based learning involving food handling and/or preparation (such as hospitality programs, curriculum-based activities like planting seeds, cultural aspects of food, etc.) must:

- Practice regular safe food handling and sanitation practices as required by the Ontario Food Premise Regulations.
- Perform hand-hygiene before and after food handling, including handling crops or soil.
- Wear a mask or face covering at all times.
- **For courses requiring food preparation:**
 - Sharing of food is not permitted. Students may consume only the food they personally prepared.

- Students must be seated when tasting or consuming food.
- Leftover food cannot be re-purposed or redistributed.
- Tasting of food grown for instructional-based purposes should not be permitted at this time.

Activities to Avoid

- Non-instructional activities that involve students in preparing or serving of food cannot occur.
- Providing food to students and/or staff as self-serve or communal sharing is also not permitted at this time. Examples include:
 - Sharing food to celebrate occasions.
 - Accessing food from a common container/tub for a treat or reward in classrooms.
 - Re-purposing or re-distributing food prepared during instructional time.
 - Drinking from mouthpiece of water-fountains. Re-filling water bottles from fountains, taps or filling stations that are cleaned and sanitized regularly is preferred.

Please see the factsheet on Student Nutrition Programs (SNP) during COVID-19 for more information regarding preparation and distribution for SNPs.