

## COVID-19 Guidance for Student Nutrition Programs

Student nutrition programs (SNPs) provide nutritious meals and snacks to students to give them the nutrients and energy they need to be ready to learn. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that SNPs continue to offer access to safe, adequate and nutritious food during the school day, as outlined in the [Nutrition Guidelines for Student Nutrition Programs](#).

The following interim guidance is to support SNP volunteer coordinators, parents, community members and staff operate an SNP, and to reduce the spread of COVID-19. SNPs must operate in accordance with all emergency orders made under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#), in addition to [Ontario Regulation 493/17 – Food Premises](#). As every SNP site will be different, it is the responsibility of SNP volunteer coordinators to review their own policies, procedures, and site-specific operations, while ensuring that the appropriate infection prevention and control measures are implemented and maintained.

More information about COVID-19 can be found in the Toronto Public Health (TPH) [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#).

### Before Re-opening

#### Review Information on:

- The mask or face covering policy for the particular SNP site (e.g. school, community centre).
- The proper [use of masks/face coverings](#).
  - Go to a private area away from others (e.g. private office) to change masks when moist or dirty.
  - More information on the use of masks or face coverings can be found [here](#).
- Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
  - When preparing food, [wash hands](#) frequently with liquid soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds.
  - [Cover coughs](#) or sneezes with the elbow or a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash hands.
- The proper use of gloves. Glove use is not essential, but if used, it is important to change them every hour, or more often, as necessary.
  - Hands should be washed and/or sanitized between changes.
  - Remove gloves when changing tasks.
  - When gloves are removed, new gloves must be used each time. Do not wear used gloves.
- The [COVID Alert app](#), so you can be notified directly if you have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.

## Prepare the Physical Space

- Check the condition of all food and discard expired or otherwise unfit products.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize all food contact surfaces, equipment and utensils.
- Ensure hand washing stations are functional and provided with adequate supplies.
- Clean and disinfect all non-food contact surfaces, including high-touch areas such as door handles and equipment knobs. Refer to section on [cleaning and disinfecting](#).
- Check thoroughly for signs of pest activity.
- Clean, sanitize and ensure all hot and cold holding facilities/equipment are functional, where applicable.
- Ensure dishwashing machines are functioning properly, where applicable.
- Ensure adequate amounts of sanitizers and detergents are available for manual dishwashing.
- Plan and modify the layout of the SNP areas (e.g. rearrange equipment or processes) to ensure enough space is provided such that all persons can maintain a physical distance of two metres (six feet) between each other.
  - To calculate the maximum number of people permitted in a SNP area at any one time, assume one person per two metres square (43 square feet) of available floor space.
  - Post signage at the entrance to the SNP area indicating the maximum number of persons that can be permitted at any one time.
  - Design a flow of traffic that encourages one-way movement with visible signage and/or floor markings.
- Provide physical cues or guides for people by placing markers such as tape or stickers, every two metres (six feet), where appropriate (e.g. food pick-up areas).
- Follow enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection policies and procedures for the site that the SNP is operating at (e.g. school, community centre), including approved chemicals, if applicable.
- Download, print and post signs in highly visible locations in the SNP area(s) to raise awareness about health and safety measures that can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 such as:
  - [Physical Distancing](#)
  - [Protect Yourself](#)
  - [Information about COVID-19](#)
  - [Hand Washing](#)
  - [Hand Sanitizing](#)
  - [Cover your Cough](#)
  - Poster for Entrances\* (e.g. [schools](#))

\*Note: SNPs should use the appropriate poster designated by the site where it operates.

## During Active Operation

### Health Screening and Attendance

- Ensure all staff/volunteers complete a [health screening questionnaire](#) before each shift. The questions can be completed online, or on paper. Follow the health screening requirements for the designated SNP site (e.g. school, community centre), where applicable.
- Adjust hours and shifts to reduce the number of people in the SNP area at any one time.
- Instruct staff/volunteers to report any illness to the site authority (e.g. school principal).
- If staff/volunteers become ill with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) while at the SNP site, they should inform the site authority immediately, and then go home right away and [self-isolate](#). Instruct them to call Telehealth at 1-866-797-0000, a health care provider, or an [Assessment Centre](#) to get tested.
- In general, individuals can return to the SNP site 14 days after their symptoms began if they had COVID-19.
- There are no clearance tests required for staff/volunteers to return to the SNP site.
- For other illnesses, or if staff/volunteers tested negative for COVID-19, they should not attend the SNP site until they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours.

### Physical Distancing

- [Physical distancing](#) refers to the practice of avoiding close contact by keeping a distance of two metres (six feet) from others.
- Arrange, mark and/or assign workstations to ensure a minimum two metres/six feet distance between people in the SNP space.
- Designate and manage entry and exit points to maintain physical distancing.
- Avoid having people gather in the SNP areas.
- Physical distancing should be maintained when accepting deliveries from suppliers and dropping off and picking up bins/trays.
  - Schedule times with individuals to pick up/drop-off items.
  - Stagger arrivals to reduce congestion, where possible.
- Monitor and manage possible student lines outside and within the SNP area(s).
  - Place visual markers every two metres (six feet) apart (e.g. stickers/tape on the floor, pylons, signs) to encourage physical distancing and guide volunteers, staff and students.
  - Request that volunteers, staff and students come one at a time to and pick-up their bins/trays.

### Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- [Wash hands](#) thoroughly with liquid soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds.
  - Direct staff and volunteers to wash their hands frequently when handling and preparing food.
  - Remember to avoid touching your face, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

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- Hand sanitizers are not a replacement for washing your hands with soap and water, and should not be used in the food preparation area by food handlers when handling or preparing food.
- [Cover coughs](#) or sneezes with a tissue. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
- Monitor supplies to ensure adequate amounts of liquid soap, paper towel (air dryer if paper towels are not available), tissues and waste containers with lined plastic bags.

### Food Safety and COVID-19

- The risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus through food is thought to be low.
- There is currently no evidence of COVID-19 being transmitted through food or food packaging. However, food should be protected from contamination at all times, as outlined in [Ontario Regulation 493/17 – Food Premises](#).
- Ensure good [food safety practices](#), in addition to the infection prevention and control measures outlined in this document, are followed when handling, preparing, transporting and serving food.

### Preparing and Handling Food

- Food handling outside of the food preparation area should be minimized as much as possible.
- Hand contact should be minimized where possible by using utensils, especially when handling ready-to-eat foods, such as cut apples, carrots and cucumbers.
- Pre-portion food items, where possible, such as individually packaging food items in containers or wrapping, before transporting to the area where it will be served.
- If it is not feasible to pre-portion food in advance, food can be portioned in the serving area as long as the practice of minimizing food handling is followed.
  - For example, a teacher could portion food items, such as crackers or baby carrots, onto individual plates prior to service from a larger box/bag. Teachers must wash their hands prior to food handling and utensils should be used, where possible.
  - Only one person should use a serving utensil.
- Food items such as whole fruits (e.g. apples, bananas, clementines) and grain products (e.g. muffins, crackers) do not need to be individually wrapped provided they are transported and served in a manner to prevent contamination.
- Food items can be put together in one container (e.g. paper or plastic bag) for each student, or each item can be available for students to take from its own bin/tray.
  - For example, if the meal includes a granola bar, a carton of milk, and a banana, these items can be packaged together into one bag and put into a bin OR each item could be put into a separate bin/tray.
- Depending on the food items, the use of trays are preferred over bins (e.g. loose apples) to allow for easier selection of food by students and minimizing hand contact.



### Transporting Food

- Bins or trays can be used to transport snacks and meals, provided all food is protected from contamination (e.g. food grade plastic/paper wrap, containers with covers, prepackaged foods).
- Before food bins or trays are picked up from the food preparation area, staff/volunteers/students should wash their hands with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) if their hands are not visibly dirty, and be instructed not to touch the food in their bins/trays.
- Bins and trays for food must be washed, rinsed and sanitized after each use, and when visibly dirty, whichever is more frequent.
  - If a bin or tray is stored in an area where people can touch it over a period of a day or week (e.g. outside a classroom), the bin/trays should be washed, rinsed and sanitized every day.

### Serving Food

- When serving food, hand contact should be minimized by using utensils, especially when handling unwrapped foods.
- Grab-and-go-formats are preferred.
  - For example, food items can be put together in one container (e.g. paper or plastic bag) for each student, or each item can be available for students to take from its own bin/tray.
  - Students should either wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer, if their hands are not visibly dirty, prior to selecting and eating food.
  - Students should select and touch only the food they are taking.
  - Common utensils should not be used.
- Buffet-style or self-service of food or drink, where students are able to select from unpackaged or prepared food (e.g. passing around a tray with common utensils to serve yourself) is currently not permitted.
- A teacher can portion and/or serve food items onto individual plates prior to service. Teachers must wash their hands with soap and water prior to food handling, and utensils should be used, where possible.
  - Teachers may use a barrier (e.g. paper towel), in place of a utensil to serve food to students (e.g. apples, bananas).

### Attendance Records and Contact Tracing

- Keep a log of when and where volunteers worked, with contact information (i.e. name and phone number or email address), in case it is required for contact tracing by Toronto Public Health.
- Toronto Public Health will use this list to help with contact tracing efforts in the event that a person tests positive or an outbreak is identified.
- Protect the personal information you collect (e.g. locked drawer/office).
- Keep records for 30 days, and then destroy the information (i.e. shred/delete).
- Call us at 416-338-7600 if you have been notified that a staff or volunteer has tested positive and/or you have concerns that others may have been exposed while at the SNP.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Maintain a log to track cleaning and disinfecting activities.
- Clean and disinfect high touch, **non-food contact surfaces**, at least twice per day, and when visibly dirty (e.g. light switches, door knobs, hand rails, tables).
- Review Public Health Ontario's [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#) fact sheet.
- For washing, rinsing and sanitizing **food contact surfaces, equipment and utensils**, follow requirements in [Ontario Regulation 493/17 – Food Premises](#). The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) has also provided additional COVID-19 guidance for food premises.

## Other Resources

[COVID-19 Guidance for Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)

[Food Safety: A Guide for Ontario's Food Handlers](#)

[COVID-19 & Student Nutrition Programs \(video\)](#)

[Food Safety & COVID-19 Guidance for Student Nutrition Programs \(video\)](#)

[Food Safety & COVID-19: Tips for Student Nutrition Programs](#)

## More Information

For more information, visit our website at [toronto.ca/COVID19](https://toronto.ca/COVID19), call us at 416-338-7600, or email us at [DineSafe@toronto.ca](mailto:DineSafe@toronto.ca).