

CIRCULAR

Date: April 23, 2020

CIRCULAR NUMBER: COVID-19: 2020-55

To: Child care facilities, ELCC program staff

Subject: Food Handling Guidance

Program(s): All

Type: Policy For Internal Reference Only
 Procedure Information Only

Effective Date Immediately

Topic: Food Handling in Child Care Facilities

We have a shared responsibility to safeguard the health of children and child care providers. As such, Manitoba Families is committed to providing updated information and guidance as it becomes available. The following is guidance based on current public health advice.

Public health guidance allows facilities with nutrition programs to continue to operate. As well, children can bring their own meals and snacks to facilities that do not offer a nutrition program. With continued focus on screening, hand hygiene, sanitation, and proper food handling, existing programming can continue. Keep in mind that an important safeguard is ensuring that staff and children who are ill stay home.

How it spreads

Coronaviruses are spread primarily from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. It spreads between people who are in close contact (less than 6 feet) for an extended period of time (more than 10 minutes). Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food.

Safe practices for preparing and serving meals and snack

- Have one person prepare and put food on plates. Avoid buffet style eating and sharing bowls such as fruit bowls, popcorn, chips, etc.
- For snack programs, dispense snacks directly to children and use prepackaged snacks only.
- Close kitchen and nourishment areas that could be accessed by children and cease activities involving child participation in food preparation.
- As much as possible, space seating to allow for distancing between children.

No sharing policies

It is important to reinforce no food or water bottle sharing policies for children. Generally, these policies are intended to reduce potential exposure to allergens, but they also help reduce virus transmission between staff and children.

General guidelines

- As applicable, make sure dishwashers are sanitizing properly. A high temperature dishwasher must reach a minimum 65.5 °C (150 °F) on the wash cycle and 82 °C (180 °F) on the rinse cycle for at least 10 seconds.
- Clean and sanitize all surfaces such as tabletops, countertops, doorknobs, faucet handles, and all other frequently touched surfaces.
- Disposable gloves should be worn per routine practice (e.g. diaper changes). However, staff are encouraged to wear reusable kitchen gloves for cleaning duties. Washing hands should be prioritized over wearing disposable gloves.

If a child or staff become ill

- If a child is being isolated, food should be delivered to the isolation area and consumed there.
- If a child or staff member is ill, they should not share dishes, utensils, towels, bedding or other personal items with anyone. Ideally, disposable dishes and utensils are preferred and should be disposed of in a tied plastic bag. If disposable dishes and utensils are not available, wash items with soap and hot water (preferably in the dishwasher) immediately after use.

If you have any questions, please email cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca or call Manitoba Government Inquiry at 204-945-3744 or toll free 1-866-MANITOBA (1-866-626-4862). Manitoba Government Inquiry staff are working with the ELCC program, including Child Care Coordinators, to respond directly and refer calls and emails when needed.

Sincerely,

Early Learning and Child Care Program