



## School Meal and Snack Programs during COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, changes will need to be made to any food services that are offered in schools. This refers to both food vendors that cater school programs, such as hot lunches, and school nutrition programs, such as the Student Nutrition Program (SNP).

School nutrition programming remains a crucial support to students and families. It is important that school nutrition programs continue to offer healthy food choices, to any student who wishes to participate, as outlined in the [School Food and Beverage Policy](#) and the 2020 Student Nutrition Program Nutrition Guidelines as appropriate, and made available with additional health and safety, physical distancing, and hygiene measures in place.

➔ For additional suggestions on menu planning, please email our Registered Dietitian at [zhangx@timiskaminghu.com](mailto:zhangx@timiskaminghu.com)

Food will need to be prepared in an inspected kitchen within the school. These kitchens meet the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises](#) and are inspected by public health inspectors to ensure they are following safe food handling practices.

The following recommendations provide guidance on how to safely operate both the SNP and catered lunch programs based on the Ministry of Education's preferred "grab and go" format.

### Type of Food Served

- All food items must be pre-packaged. Refrain from serving loose food items, such as pre-cut vegetables that are not wrapped or in packaging.

### Delivery Model

- Preferably "Grab and Go" format to follow a bin-type program for ease of delivery and access.
- Individual servings for snacks or meals can be pre-bagged or displayed in bins to provide students with choice.

### Infection Protection and Control Considerations

- The individual(s) preparing meals and snacks must adhere to the COVID-19 prevention protocols, including [masking/face covering](#), physical distancing, and self-screening before entering the school. Limit the number of staff in kitchens and ensure physical distance is maintained during food preparation.
- Hand hygiene must be performed prior to preparing meals and snacks.
- Food must be pre-packaged.
- Physical distancing of students needs to occur when accessing food. All food should be prepackaged or provided using serving utensils to students by a staff member/volunteer wearing a mask/face covering and physically distancing from students. It would be ideal to

have the SNP delivered within classrooms if the food was able to be served safely to allow for easier physical distancing between students and reduced potential of mixing cohorts.

- Staff and students must wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer prior to getting food and eating.
- Students should be instructed to grab their item and refrain from touching anything else in the bin.
- If coolers are to be used for keeping food cold in the classroom for a short period of time, ice packs and storage thermometers are to be used for the food to keep it cold. Potentially hazardous foods should not be kept on ice packs in a cooler for a prolonged period of time. Having the cooler would allow for the food to be in the class for serving food and returning it to the designated fridge, if any food remains.
- All surfaces, containers, bins/coolers for food need to be sanitized prior to and after each use.

### Healthy Suggestions for Grab and Go Food Choices

Food Grouping	Grab and Go Ideas
Whole Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-packaged whole grain crackers</li> <li>• Pre-packaged whole grain pita chips</li> <li>• Individual containers of cereal</li> <li>• Individually wrapped small whole-grain muffins</li> <li>• Low-sugar granola bars</li> <li>• Individual bags of unflavoured, unsalted popcorn</li> </ul>
Proteins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual cheese servings (ex. cheese strings)</li> <li>• Low sugar yogurt cups or tubes</li> <li>• Individual containers of fortified soy milk and cow's milk</li> <li>• Packaged pre-boiled eggs</li> <li>• Low sodium canned fish (light tuna, salmon)</li> <li>• Individual containers of hummus</li> <li>• Individual bags of roasted unsalted soy nuts or other legumes</li> </ul>
Vegetables and Fruit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-cut and pre-packaged fruits and vegetables</li> <li>• Fruit with a "natural" packaging (i.e. banana)</li> <li>• Canned fruit packed in water</li> <li>• No sugar-added applesauce</li> <li>• Individual packages of roasted vegetables or fruit (ex. snap peas, carrots, beets)</li> <li>• Individual small containers of guacamole</li> </ul>

➔ For further guidance on food safety and infection prevention and control practices for delivery and service of food from vendors, email [schools@timiskaminghu.com](mailto:schools@timiskaminghu.com)

## Other Food and/or Lunch Precautions

Additional considerations that can be put into place to make the school environment a safer place include:

- Stagger lunch times to allow students to wash hands before eating, without creating congestion in washrooms or handwashing stations.
- Enforcing a 'no food sharing' policy.
- There should be no food sharing of common items (ex. a bowl of popcorn, condiments like salt and pepper)
- Students should eat lunch in their classroom with their cohort.
- If weather permits, having lunch breaks outside.
- Remove food items that are not prepackaged.
- Remove microwaves from student areas.
- Students should bring their own labeled water bottle, kept with them during the day and not shared.
- Water filling stations should be used to refill a water bottle. Water fountain use is restricted but may be used to fill water bottles in some schools. Follow school board policies on use of water fountains.

Please, refer to the [Ministry of Education's Guide to Reopening Ontario's Schools](#) for more information on lunch/food service recommendations.

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**For more information please contact our Registered Dietitian or School Nurses at the Timiskaming Health Unit:**

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Adapted from: Porcupine Health Unit

