

# 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 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 [healthyschools@nwhu.on.ca](mailto:healthyschools@nwhu.on.ca) and ask to be referred to a Registered Dietitian.

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.

## Student Nutrition Program (SNP)

### Type of Food Served

- All food items must be pre-packaged or portioned into individual servings. Refrain from serving loose food items, such as pre-cut vegetables that are not wrapped or in packaging.
- Food from external vendors can continue to be purchased, following the guidance below. Food should arrive in individually portioned containers.

### Delivery Model

- Must be "Grab and Go" format for ease of delivery and access, and should be classroom-based.
- Individual servings for snacks or meals can be pre-bagged or served in bins to provide students with choice.
- There can be no bulk "self-serve" items.
- Students cannot be involved in food prep or serving for non-instructional activities.

### Infection Prevention and Control Considerations

- The individual(s) preparing meals and snacks must adhere to the COVID-19 prevention protocols, including masking, physical distancing, and [self-screening](#) before entering the school.
- [Hand hygiene](#) must be performed prior to preparing meals and snacks.
- Students must wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer prior to getting food and eating.
- Do not provide unpackaged loose food.
- Students should be instructed to grab their item and refrain from touching anything else in the bin.
- Consider having students line up 2 metres apart in a line, or, have one student at a time come up to the bins.
- Students and staff should wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer after discarding leftovers and packaging before returning to their desks.
- All surfaces, bins, and containers for food must be cleaned and sanitized prior to and after each use.
- Limit the number of staff in kitchens and ensure physical distance is maintained during food preparation.



## 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>• Pre-packaged rice crackers</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 [healthyschools@nwhu.on.ca](mailto:healthyschools@nwhu.on.ca).

## Other Food and/or Lunch Precautions

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

- Staff and students perform proper hand hygiene before and after eating. 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 or that require tongs to be served.
- Remove microwaves from student areas.
- Students should bring their own labeled drink 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.

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