Best practice recommendations

These recommendations are based on the evidence around COVID-19 transmission and are jointly recommended by Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), Workplace Health and Safety (WHS), Nutrition Food Linen Environmental Services (NFLES), and Environmental Public Health (EPH). Recommendations for healthcare settings vary from those for the general public and community due to the presence of vulnerable individuals, outbreak management experience and the serious effects of staffing limitations in healthcare.

Selecting decorations

- When removing from storage ensure that the outside of the cleanable container is cleaned prior to moving it into a patient care area.
- Do not move décor contaminated with dust or those than cannot be cleaned into patient care areas.
- Discard damaged or visibly soiled décor.
- Ensure décor does not elicit hand contact; use décor for viewing, not touching.
- Donated decorations may only be accepted if they meet these guidelines and the site/unit is able to accommodate them.

Placing decorations

- Follow Fire & Life Safety recommendations for all decorations. Guidance information is available on Insite for all AHS facilities.
- Decorations are to be handled only by healthcare providers or others (e.g., volunteers) under healthcare provider supervision.
- Low to no-touch decorations (i.e., wall decorations, wreaths, Christmas trees, posters) are the preferred seasonal and holiday decorations.
- Do not place decorations on high touch or regularly cleaned surfaces (such as handrails). Do not decorate the workstations on wheels or other mobile electronic devices.
- Decorations should not interfere with regular clinical or housekeeping duties and are not to obstruct clinical signs, access to personal protective equipment or hand hygiene locations.
- High touch or tactile decorations should be avoided. If they must be used, these should be wipeable with someone assigned to clean regularly. Cleaning is a shared responsibility between unit staff, environmental services and others. If non-wipeable, remove these decorations.
- Decorations are best in locations out of public reach or under continuous view of staff to monitor for any handling concerns. If there are handling concerns, move decorations out of public reach or remove decorations.
- Any decorations affixed to walls or windows, including wall stickers and “klings” must not damage the paint or other finishes.
- At the end of the season, when decorations are returned to storage, place inside a closed and wipeable bin or bag (i.e., plastic container or tote) to ensure protection from dust and other contamination.
Costumes

- Costumes may be worn, if appropriate to the care setting and patients.
- Costumes must not interfere with hand hygiene or use of personal protective equipment.
- Headgear, wigs, hair or other costume elements must not have contact with patients when performing tasks including bending, transferring and assisting with meals.
- Costumes and footwear must be clean.

Food

Sharing food or beverages is considered high risk by the Government of Alberta. All Albertans are discouraged from sharing food or beverages at this time. In addition, consuming food in patient care areas increases risk to healthcare workers. Refer to Staff COVID-19 Tips: Eating and Drinking at Work, Personal Clothing, Cleaning Devices and Accessories.

Celebrations

All Alberta government restrictions regarding gatherings and celebrations must be followed https://www.alberta.ca/restrictions-on-gatherings.aspx. In addition, Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Nutrition Food Linen Environmental Services (NFLES) and Environmental Public Health (EPH) have indicated the following during COVID-19 pandemic:

1. **Workplace or staff celebrations**

   - AHS staff must not accept donated food for personal consumption and/or distribute donated food to other AHS staff, including:
     - donations from the public, from patients/families, and from other AHS staff or physicians;
     - individually wrapped food and commercially prepared food.
   - AHS staff may bring food from home or other external sources (e.g., restaurant take-out) for personal consumption.
   - AHS staff may have external food delivered (e.g., personal size pizza, burger meal, entree) for personal consumption. These are for a single individual to consume; there is to be no sharing of external food.
   - Staff need to determine how to safely obtain the food from the delivery service while considering current site visitor restrictions.
   - AHS staff may not have external food delivered to be distributed to colleagues. This includes individually wrapped servings.
   - Staff shall not share food or beverages. All Albertans are discouraged from sharing food or beverages at this time.
   - AHS management shall not be arranging or supporting group food events (e.g., unit potlucks) and should post the Physical Distancing Poster in all staff break lounge or eating areas.
   - With respect to break rooms and common areas where food and beverages may be consumed:
     - Each staff member **must** perform hand hygiene before and after eating.
     - As masks cannot be worn while eating or drinking, physical distancing of 2 meters **must** be maintained.
     - Stagger eating times or locations as required to maintain physical distancing.
2. Patient, family and visitor celebrations

- All Designated Support Person (DSP)/visitor restrictions apply: [https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17001.aspx](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17001.aspx).
- Follow [EPH guidelines](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17001.aspx) for bringing food for patients. General food donations are not accepted for non-specific patients at this time.
- In situations where site NFLES cannot meet the patient’s requests, site and unit management should continue, wherever operationally feasible, to support family bringing external food for patients.

**Note** the following additional considerations:

- Site/unit staff need to determine how to get the food from the family to the patient, considering current site DSP/visitor restrictions and usual safe food handling practices.
- Instruct families to check with site or unit management as to their capacity to receive deliveries and if a delivery can be coordinated. If they cannot, then a delivery should not occur. If they can, then work with the site or unit to arrange a time and place for the delivery to occur.
- Any delivery needs to be in clean packaging and arranged prior with the site.
- Deliveries are to be for an individual patient and labelled with the patient’s name.
- Sites are unable to accommodate DSPs/visitors dining with patients inside healthcare facilities.

3. At home celebrations

- Follow the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) [advice on planning safe holiday celebrations](https://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/).  

**Donations and gifts**

Food donations for staff and/or patients are not accepted at this time. This includes gifting between co-workers, if done on site.

Donated plants and decorations are to be handled following the unit, site or areas existing policies and the overarching guidelines about handling items delivered during the pandemic.

**Toys, therapy and play items**

- Toys, therapy and play items may be donated if they are new and the unit is able to arrange safe delivery of the items.
- Fragile items, like glass and porcelain, are not accepted on pediatric units.
- Stuffed soft toys may be donated for an individual; these will not be accepted for unit use as they cannot be safely cleaned.
- Liquids such as bubble mix or paints must be sealed and not leak during delivery.
- Unless a unit has existing compatible gaming systems, donations of game cartridges or discs is not recommended.
- Hand-made or home-made items must be new and must be cleanable to be accepted.