

Decorations, Costumes, Food, Celebrations and Donations Information Sheet

Note: If you have any questions or comments regarding this information sheet contact Infection Prevention & Control at ipcsurvstdadmin@ahs.ca.

Best practice recommendations

These are joint recommendations 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 may be different than those for the 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 **before** moving it into a patient care area.
- **Do not** move decor contaminated with dust or those that cannot be cleaned into patient care areas.
- Discard damaged or visibly soiled decor.
- Ensure decor does not elicit hand contact; use decor 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.

For more information contact
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Costumes

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

Hallowe'en activities

- Ensure all children and accompanying adults are asymptomatic prior to entry to the facility.
- Children and accompanying adults must perform hand hygiene at the facility entrance.
- Any symptomatic patient/resident must remain isolated in their room as per AHS additional precautions (regardless of outbreak status) and, therefore, will not participate in the activity.
- Facilities on outbreak:
 - Continuing care: no events at a site with an outbreak of any kind.
 - Acute care: no events in any unit/area with an outbreak of any kind.
 - Children's facility (e.g., school, daycare, etc.) - the facility that the children are from cannot have an outbreak of any kind.
- Treats/food items:
 - Must be commercially prepared and individually wrapped.
 - May be distributed at the site/unit entrance by a healthcare worker (HCW) who performs hand hygiene before handing out treats and at regular intervals while handling treats.
 - Children and accompanying adults should not go room-to-room in any facility.
 - Non-clinical areas - designate an area in which treats will be distributed.
 - Residents and patients may not hand out treats.
- Adhere to the costumes recommendation in the sections above.
- Hallowe'en parades
 - Consider outdoor parades when possible.
 - All participants should try to maintain some physical distance from patients/residents/HCWs during the parade.
- If a site or organization has implemented additional measures or restrictions, these should continue to be followed.

Food and gatherings/celebrations

1. Follow pre-pandemic food handling and food safety practices.
2. **Staff**
 - Follow guidelines for shared spaces (i.e. hand hygiene, cleaning of spaces and surfaces, etc.) as outlined in [AHS COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook \[version 4\]](#) on Insite.
3. **Patients, families and DFSPs/visitors**
 - DFSP/visitor guidance is outlined on the [Family/Visitors of Patients & Residents](#) website.

- Follow EPH guidelines for bringing food for patients. General food donations are not accepted for 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 guidance and usual safe food handling practices.
- Instruct families to check with site/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.
- Families should check with site/unit management about DSPs/visitors dining with patients inside healthcare facilities.

Donations and gifts

Donated plants and decorations

- Use existing unit, program or site policies.

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, such as 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 are not recommended.
- Handmade or homemade items must be new and must be cleanable to be accepted.