

Guidelines for School Food Activities that DO NOT Require a Food Handling Permit

Schools often host food programs for their students. Environmental Public Health (EPH) issues Food Handling Permits for select meal and snack programs. Schools often operate other food activities that do not require a Food Handling Permit, including special lunch events, catered lunches, milk programs, and fundraisers. Safe food handling practices for these activities are described below.

Lunch Events: Food Prepared in the School

Lunch events are food activities that occur occasionally throughout the school year where school staff and/or volunteers prepare simple food for students. Meal/snack programs that occur regularly are not lunch events.

- Purchase food from approved sources, like grocery stores. Do not serve home-prepared foods.
- Store high-risk foods like hot dogs and cheese at 4°C or colder before use. Monitor the fridge temperature with a thermometer.
- Clean and sanitize food preparation surfaces and dining tables before use. Approved sanitizers for food preparation surfaces include:
 - Bleach solution at 100 parts per million (ppm).
Mix 1/2 teaspoon of unscented bleach in one litre of warm water. Use a chlorine test strip to check the concentration.
 - Quaternary ammonium compound (QUATS) sanitizer at 200 ppm.
Follow directions on the label for food contact surfaces. Use a QUATS test strip to check the concentration.
- Wash your hands before any food preparation. Students should wash their hands before eating. Hand sinks must have liquid soap and paper towels.
- Clean and sanitize all dishes using at least a two-compartment sink. The three steps of ware washing dishes by hand are wash, rinse and sanitize with an approved sanitizer.
- Hold any hot foods before serving at 60°C or warmer. Monitor hot holding temperatures with a probe thermometer.
- **Contact your local EPH office for further advice if hosting a BBQ as there is a greater risk of foodborne illness.**

Lunch Events: Food Purchased from External Sources

Purchased lunches may occur regularly or occasionally as part of a meal/snack program.

If the food is served to the student in its original container, be sure to follow these guidelines.

- Purchase food from approved sources like a restaurant or retail outlet with a valid Food Handling Permit.
- Ensure food is transported and held at safe temperatures. Monitor temperatures with a probe thermometer.
 - Hot foods must be 60°C or warmer.
 - Cold foods must be 4°C or colder.
- Clean and sanitize dining tables before lunch using an approved sanitizer for food preparation surfaces (see page 1).
- Encourage children to wash their hands before eating.

If the food is portioned by school staff, follow the guidelines above and those below.

- Wash your hands before handling food. Hand sinks must have liquid soap and paper towels.
- Serve food with utensils whenever possible, or wear food grade gloves.
- Wash serving utensils in at least a two-compartment sink. The three steps of washing utensils by hand are wash, rinse and sanitize with an approved sanitizer (see page 1).
- Serve students using disposable plates, cups and utensils.

Milk Programs

- Sell milk in their original containers. Sell milk from approved sources, like grocery stores, and approved dairy facilities.
- Store milk in a fridge at 4°C or colder. Monitor the fridge temperature with a thermometer.

Fundraisers

If the school is selling frozen pizzas, meat, cookie dough or similar food items, be sure to:

- Sell food from approved sources.
- Keep cold foods at 4°C or colder, or keep foods frozen until delivered to the final customer.

Bake sale information is available at www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp under Resources.

For more information, please contact your nearest Environmental Public Health office.

Edmonton Main Office
Calgary Main Office
Lethbridge Office

780-735-1800
403-943-2295
403-388-6689

Grande Prairie Main Office
Red Deer Main Office
www.albertahealthservices.ca/eph.asp

780-513-7517
403-356-6366

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