

Child Care Food Handling Procedures During COVID-19

According to the CDC and FDA the virus that causes COVID-19 is most commonly spread from person to person through respiratory droplets. The risk of COVID-19 transmission from touching surfaces is low. However, it is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object, including food or food packaging, that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Food Handling and Preparation

- **Wash Your Hands!** Before and after handling, preparing, or serving food, it is important to always wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. If you touch your face, wash hands. If you are wearing gloves and contaminate them, remove gloves, wash your hands, and put on a new pair of gloves.
- Clean and sanitize kitchen and food contact surfaces often.
- If a stronger disinfecting product needs to be used due to contamination (such as following coughing or sneezing), make sure the surface is rinsed with water after the required contact time with the disinfectant.
- Follow food safety guidelines: separate raw meat from other foods (store on the bottom shelf in a pan or on a plate), cook foods to the right temperature (use a thermometer to check), and refrigerate foods promptly (cold foods should be at 41° Fahrenheit, or less, within 4 hours of cooking or preparing). Note that refrigerators that store breast milk should be kept at 39° Fahrenheit, or less. See the [Washington State Food Worker Manual](#) for more information.



Mealtimes: Physical Distancing, Masks and Food Service

- Make sure children and staff wash their hands before and after eating.
- Stagger, or alternate, lunchtime to help limit the number of children in each classroom.
- Serve meals in well-ventilated classrooms or program space, if possible, rather than in a common area. If feasible, consider eating meals outside.
- If feasible, spread out seating so that children and staff are six feet apart at table. This is especially important because masks are not worn by children while eating.
- To help reduce the risk of transmission of the virus during mealtimes, child care providers should wear their masks while the children are eating. Child care providers are still encouraged to sit with children at the table, engage in pleasant conversation, and assist in serving, but should wear their masks while doing so.
- Family-style meals and buffet-style service are not allowed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children should not be allowed to serve their own food or snacks. Instead, staff should handle tongs, utensils, or wax paper to serve foods onto children's plates to reduce spread of germs.
- Providers should closely supervise children to ensure they are not sharing food or touching each other during mealtime.



Feeding infants and young children

Follow all current child care regulations surrounding infant and toddler feeding ([WAC 110-300-0280, -0281, -0285](#)).



It is important to comfort crying, sad, or anxious infants and toddlers and they often need to be held. To the extent possible when holding or feeding young children, staff can protect themselves by:

- washing hands thoroughly before and after feeding infants and young children.
- having extra changes of clothing available in case clothing becomes contaminated with bodily fluids from the child (such as saliva, nasal discharge, spit-up).
- using an item, such as a receiving blanket dedicated to one child, as a cover during feeding or handling of infant.
- placing any contaminated clothing or blankets in a plastic bag until it can be washed.
- washing any areas of bare skin on their body that have been touched by a child's body fluids.

Toothbrushing

Toothbrushing is not allowed at this time due the activities increased risk of saliva exposure.

Oral health promotion activities can continue. See [CavityFreeKids.org](#), [www.AmericasToothFairy.org](#), [Sesame Street's Healthy Teeth, Healthy Me](#) and [Oral Health Curriculum](#) for creative oral health educational activities.