

Food Safety in Schools



April 2019

Welcome Letter

The type of food services that can be provided in schools, such as snack / breakfast programs, before and after school programs, hospitality programs, special events and fundraisers involving food is based on the kitchen facilities available within the school. To assist you in determining the type of food service that you can offer for your program, Middlesex-London Health Unit and Southwestern Public Health have produced this document.

This document references food safety standards as found in Ontario Regulation 493/17 - Food Premises. Nutrition standards can be found in the Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy (PPM 150) and in the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services Student Nutrition Program Guidelines.

If you have any questions regarding food service regulatory requirements, please contact your local public health unit office.

Middlesex-London Health Unit
Phone: 519-663-5317 ext. 2300
E-mail: inspections@mlhu.on.ca
<https://www.healthunit.com>

Southwestern Public Health (Woodstock and St. Thomas sites)
Phone: 1-800-922-0096
E-mail: info@swpublichealth.ca
<https://www.swpublichealth.ca>

Sincerely,

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Definitions

Bake Sale: The sale of low-risk food such as cookies, cakes and brownies. Bake sales do not include the sale of potentially hazardous food (cream pies, meringues or other cream filled products).

Commercial Food Program or School Hospitality Program: Programs involving the preparation of food by students for sale to the students and / or the public.

Equipment: Any appliance, apparatus or device that is or may be used in the operation or maintenance of a food premises, including vending machines, but does not include utensils or multi-service articles.

Food Contact Surfaces: The surface of counters, equipment and utensils with which food may normally come into contact.

Food Premises: A premises where food or milk is manufactured, processed, prepared, stored, handled, displayed, distributed, transported, sold or offered for sale. Food Premises are inspected regularly by Public Health Inspectors.

Handwashing Station: A hand basin with hot and cold running water that is located in close proximity to a soap dispenser and either a mechanical hand dryer or a single-service towel dispenser.

Low-risk Food: Food that is not potentially hazardous food. Low-risk food may include, whole vegetables and fruits, granola bars, crackers, and bread products.

Multi-service Article: Any container or utensil that is intended for repeated use in the service or sale of food.

Nutrition Enhancement Program: Any program that involves the provision of snacks or meals to students. This can include snack programs, milk programs, lunch programs, breakfast programs and before-and-after school programs.

Other programs involving food handling at a school may include hospitality programs, life skills kitchens, special events / fundraisers, BBQ events, educational food days / educational events, teacher appreciation days, parent associations and other school council events.

Potentially Hazardous Food: Food in a form or state that is capable of supporting the growth of infectious or toxigenic micro-organisms and which requires time and temperature control to limit such growth. Potentially hazardous food may include meat, poultry, eggs, fish, custards, cream pies and meringues.

Potluck: A meal, intended for a specific group of persons (e.g. club members, teachers, committee, etc.) in which the participants bring various foods to be shared among that specific group only. If everyone who will be consuming the food has brought a dish to share, then the event would be considered private and food can be prepared at home. For example, 5 participants supplying home-made food should not share the food with others outside the group. The local health units strongly recommend that safe food handling techniques be followed.

Pre-packaged Foods: Food that is packaged at a premises other than the premises at which it is offered for sale.

Sanitizing: Treatment designed to reduce the level of microorganisms to a level that will not compromise the safety of food products, and “sanitize” has a corresponding meaning.

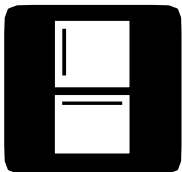
Food Safety Requirements

To ensure the safety of foods offered, follow these requirements and refer to the kitchen / classroom scenarios.



Food Supply

- All food served must come from an approved source.
- Food prepared at home cannot be served.
 - See the Frequently Asked Question “Can food be prepared at home and served at the school?” for further information.



Food Storage

- Refrigerators / freezers are required for storing potentially hazardous foods, such as meat, eggs, dairy products and cut vegetables and fruits.
- An accurate thermometer must be provided in each refrigerator.
- Check temperatures of refrigerators regularly to ensure that foods are kept at 4°C (40°F) or colder.
- Check freezers to ensure foods are frozen.
- Foods must be protected from contamination. This includes:
 - Storing foods off the floor / ground.
 - Using food grade containers.
 - Covering or wrapping all foods.
 - Keeping raw meat, poultry, eggs and seafood separate from or below ready-to-eat or cooked foods.



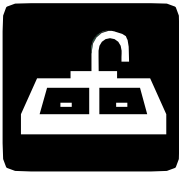
Food Handlers

- At least one food handler or supervisor who has completed food handler training must be on-site during operation. (*See FAQ)
- Wear clean clothes.
- Confine hair to protect food (e.g. wear a hat or hair net).
- Must not handle food when sick and until they have been well for 48 hours.
- Do not eat while in the process of preparing foods, instead take a break to do this.



Handwashing

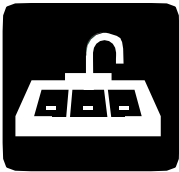
- A separate handwashing station, that is conveniently located, must be provided if there is any type of food handling.
- The handwashing station must have:
 - Hot and cold running water
 - Liquid soap in a dispenser, and
 - Paper towels in a dispenser.
- Hands must be washed before preparing food, after sneezing or coughing, and after using the washroom.
- Alcohol based hand sanitizer or gloves do not replace handwashing.
- Gloves are for single tasks only.
 - Hands must be washed before and after glove use.
 - Wear a bandage and gloves if you have a cut or sore on your hands. Do not allow a cut, sore or bandage to come into contact with foods.
- Always encourage everyone to wash their hands before eating.



Dishwashing

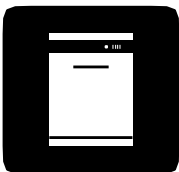
Options:

1. Two compartment sink:
 - If using single service disposable dishes and utensils for eating.
2. Three compartment sink:
 - If using reusable dishes and utensils for eating.
3. A dishwasher:
 - If meeting the requirements of Ontario Regulation 493/17.



Methods

1. Two compartment sink:
 - Wash with detergent and hot water.
 - Rinse under running water.
 - Sanitize in the second sink.
 - Air dry on a drainage rack.
2. Three compartment sink:
 - Wash with detergent and hot water.
 - Rinse in the second sink in clean, warm water.
 - Sanitize in the third sink.
 - Air dry on drainage rack.





Cleaning and Sanitizing

- All surfaces must be kept clean and in good repair.
- Have clean cloths for cleaning and sanitizing preparation and service areas.
- All food contact surfaces must be readily cleanable and be cleaned and sanitized before and after each use (every two hours if in constant use).
- For dishwashing:
 - Chlorine solution (100 ppm concentration for a 45 second contact time).
 - Quaternary ammonium solution (200 ppm concentration for a 45 second contact time).
 - Iodine solution (25 ppm concentration for a 45 second contact time).
- Other sanitizing agents may be approved. Contact your Public Health Inspector before switching sanitizers.
- Test strips should be provided to verify the sanitizer concentration.
- Chemicals must be clearly labelled and stored away from all food.
- Use chemicals according to manufacturer's instructions.



Temperature Control of Foods

- Prepare foods as close to serving time as possible.
- Thaw foods in one of 3 acceptable ways:
 - In the refrigerator.
 - Under cold running water.
 - In the microwave (cooking must immediately follow).
- Cook potentially hazardous foods to the correct temperature for at least 15 seconds. Use a probe thermometer to check:
 - Food mixtures, poultry products, ground poultry or seafood reach 74°C (165°F)
 - Whole poultry reaches 82°C (180°F)
 - Pork or ground beef reach 71°C (160°F), and
 - Fish reaches 70°C (158°F).
- Reheat foods quickly to the original cooking temperature.
- Keep hot foods at 60°C (140°F) or hotter (e.g. chafing dishes, BBQs, slow cookers).
- Cool foods quickly.
- Keep cold foods at 4°C (40°F) or colder (e.g. refrigerators, or if for a short time, coolers supplied with ice or ice packs).

Scenarios

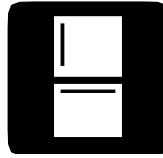
The types of foods that can be served will depend on the facilities that are available. Refer to these scenarios to determine what you can serve.

Scenario 1

My kitchen or classroom has:



No sinks



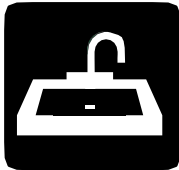
Access to a refrigerator

I can:

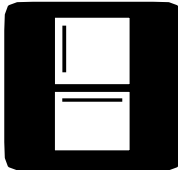
- serve prepackaged, individually wrapped low-risk foods (e.g. unsweetened applesauce cups, whole grain granola bars).
- serve pre-washed whole vegetables and fruits (e.g. apples, oranges).
- serve potentially hazardous pre-packaged foods if I can maintain temperature control (e.g. milk, yogurt cups, string cheese).

Scenario 2

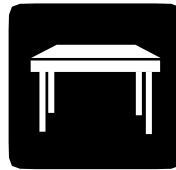
My kitchen or classroom has:



One sink, equipped with liquid soap and paper towels for handwashing



A refrigerator



A food grade, smooth, non-absorbent food preparation surface



An appropriate labelled sanitizer with test strips.

I must:

- clean and sanitize the sink prior to use as a **handwashing sink**.
- use **only** disposable plates, cups, and utensils.

I can do as above (Scenario 1), plus:

- serve food that has been prepared in other commercial premises.

Scenario 3

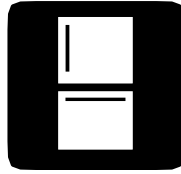
My kitchen or classroom has:



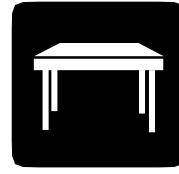
A two compartment sink



Liquid soap and paper towels



A refrigerator



A food grade, smooth, non-absorbent food preparation surface



An appropriate labelled sanitizer with test strips.

I must:

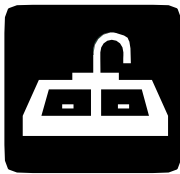
- clean and sanitize the sinks prior to use.
- use **one side of sink as a handwashing sink**.
- use **only** disposable plates, cups, and utensils.

I can do as above (Scenarios 1 & 2), plus:

- Use one sink for washing vegetables and fruit.

Scenario 4

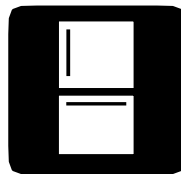
My kitchen or classroom has:



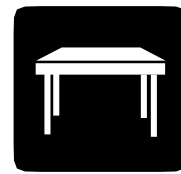
A two compartment sink for dishwashing



A separate handwashing sink, with liquid soap and paper towels



Refrigeration, cooking and reheating equipment



A food grade, smooth non-absorbent food preparation surface



An appropriate labelled sanitizer with test strips.

I must:

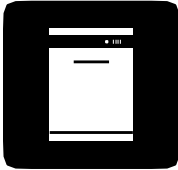
- clean and sanitize the sinks prior to use.
- provide **only** disposable plates, cups, and utensils to individuals.
- use the two-compartment sink method for dishwashing items used in food preparation (E.g. Cutting board, knife, etc.).

I can do as above (Scenarios 1 to 3), plus:

- serve food prepared in my kitchen / classroom (e.g. vegetables and fruits peeled and sliced on-site, sandwiches, pasta).

Scenario 5

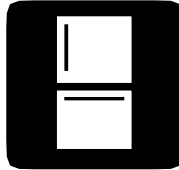
My kitchen or classroom has:



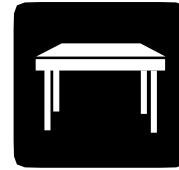
A three compartment sink for dishwashing or a commercial dishwasher



A separate handwashing sink, with liquid soap and paper towels



Refrigeration, cooking and reheating equipment



A food grade, smooth non-absorbent food preparation surface



An appropriate labelled sanitizer with test strips.

I must:

- clean and sanitize the sinks prior to use.
- use the three-compartment sink method or commercial dishwasher for dishwashing.

I can do as above (Scenarios 1 to 4), plus:

- use **reusable** plates, cups, and utensils.

Food Allergies

Many people have sensitivities to food. Reactions can range from mild to life-threatening and can change from one exposure to the next. It is important to realize that what one person can safely eat, can cause a life-threatening reaction in another. Being aware of what is in the food and preventing cross-contamination will reduce the risk of an adverse reaction. Remember to keep foods separate and to clean and sanitize utensils / surfaces often.

More information on food sensitivities and intolerances can be found on the Government of Canada's website at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-allergies-intolerances/food-intolerances/food-sensitivities-intolerances.html>

For information on food allergies and allergen labelling (for consumers) or to sign up for email notifications of food recalls go to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's website: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/information-for-consumers/fact-sheets-and-infographics/food-allergies/eng/1332442914456/1332442980290>

Growing Produce at School

Gardens used to grow vegetables and fruits have become very popular in school settings. Gardens can be grown in soil or in tower gardens, which uses aeroponic growing technology.

Some items to consider when planning your garden:

Location: History of the land (what was the land used for in the past? Was it a parking lot, gas station, etc.? What type of industries are near by? Are the neighbouring industries a potential source of polluted runoff?). It is important to ensure your garden is protected from any potential hazards.

Clean soil: Clean soil is essential to creating a healthy garden, therefore it is important to assess the soil for potential contaminants, acidity, composition, and nutritional quality. To improve soil quality, consider adding organic fertilizers or school compost.

Clean water: It is very important to know the safety of your water source to avoid introducing pathogens, heavy metals and / or chemicals into your garden. Most municipal water systems should be safe since regular testing is conducted, but private water supplies (such as well water) should be tested regularly to ensure it is safe to use.

If you plan to use rain barrels to water your plants, make sure they are emptied out weekly and are screened to prevent breeding of insects and to limit the entry of other debris (such as leaves, roof runoff, dirt, etc.). Secure barrels properly and elevate it to increase your water pressure and to make it easier to attach a hose or place a watering can under.

Clean hands: Handwashing plays a crucial role in preventing foodborne illness and to prevent contamination of the produce. Hands must always be washed with soap and clean, running water and then dried using single-use towels.

For more information on growing produce at school safely, please visit:

https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Documents/SchoolGardens_StartupGuide.pdf

<https://www.durham.ca/en/health-and-wellness/resources/Documents/SchoolHealth/SchoolGardenGuide.pdf>

Special Events

A special event is an event where food is sold, given or offered to the public, whether it is a charitable or commercial event. It is a temporary event or special occasion rather than an ongoing or long-term operation. Please see **Potluck** in the definitions section to read how potlucks differ from special events.

To ensure the safety of foods at special events, follow the requirements in the Food Safety Requirements section of this document.

Additional requirements for special events include:

- Where access to plumbed sinks is not available, the following must be set up if food handling is to occur:
 - An adequate supply of potable water in clean water container(s) for handwashing, food preparation and equipment cleaning.
 - A **separate handwashing station**, including a container of warm water with a tap, liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels.
 - Leak-proof containers / tanks for the storage of wastewater.
- Have an adequate supply of clean cooking and serving utensils.
- Have a power source / backup supply (i.e. generator, propane, burners).



Notification Requirements

If you are adding a food program to your school or renovating your facilities, please notify your local public health unit.

Middlesex-London Health Unit
Phone: 519-663-5317 ext. 2300
E-mail: inspections@mlhu.on.ca

Southwestern Public Health (Woodstock and St. Thomas sites)
Phone: 1-800-922-0096
E-mail: environmentalhealth@swpublichealth.ca

If you're having a special event, please fill out and submit the special event form for your area:

Middlesex-London Health Unit
www.healthunit.com/food-safety-at-special-events

Southwestern Public Health
www.swpublichealth.ca/your-environment/environmental-health/food-safety/special-events-notification

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is responsible for catered meals to the school?

The responsibility is shared between the food premises preparing and delivering the food and the school. The food premises is responsible for preparing, handling and transporting the food safely. The school is responsible for food safety once the food is received at the school and is distributed for service / sale.

Can food be prepared at home and served at the school?

Food cannot be prepared at home and served in the school. Any food items that are intended to be offered to students or the public must be prepared in an inspected kitchen or at the school's kitchen / servery. The preparation area at the school must be inspected and assessed by your local Public Health Inspector. Some exceptions to this rule include bake sales or potlucks. View these two definitions in the definitions section of this document.

Do food handlers need to wear gloves when preparing food?

Wearing gloves is not a requirement. Gloves can be used, however, you must use them appropriately. Gloves do **not** replace handwashing. Hands must be washed before putting on gloves and when changing to a fresh pair. Gloves must be changed frequently, for example, when they become contaminated, damaged or when changing food handling tasks, etc.

What do I do if there are not enough sinks available for handwashing and dishwashing?

Ontario Regulation 493/17 requires a handwashing station to be available and to be fully separated from the sinks used for dishwashing. A two-compartment sink can be used for washing, rinsing and sanitizing utensils used only for preparing food (and disposable plates and cutlery must be used for people consuming food). Once cutlery or dishware is used by people consuming food (non-disposable), then a three-compartment sink or a commercial dishwasher is required. If the kitchen does not have the required number of sinks, please discuss with your local Public Health Inspector for potential options. Where food is handled, there must always be a separate handwashing station supplied with hot and cold running water, liquid soap in a dispenser and paper towels.

What are the approved chemicals used for sanitizing?

All multi-use utensils, equipment and food contact surfaces must be washed with warm water and detergent, rinsed with clean warm water, and then sanitized using the proper concentration of sanitizing solution. The three approved sanitizers with their required concentrations include: 100 ppm chlorine, 200 ppm quaternary ammonium (Quats), and 25 ppm iodine. The appropriate sanitizing test kit (test papers) must be used to ensure that the required concentrations of sanitizing solutions are being maintained.

Who needs to be a certified food handler?

As of July 1, 2018, Ontario Regulation 493/17 - Food Premises require a certified food handler on-site in a food service premises. The regulation states:

Every operator of a food service premise shall ensure that there is at least one food handler or supervisor on the premise who has completed food handler training during every hour in which the premise is operating.

“food service premise” means any food premise where meals or meal portions are prepared for immediate consumption or sold or served in a form that will permit immediate consumption on the premises or elsewhere.

In addition, in the City of London and in all municipalities in Middlesex County, Food Premises Inspection and Mandatory Food Handler Training By-laws are in effect. The by-laws state:

The operator of a food premises where hazardous food is prepared must ensure that there is at all times, when the food premises is operating, at least one certified food handler who is supervising the preparation, processing, packaging, service or storage of food.

Available online:

- City of London - [By-law No. PH-16](#)
- Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc - [By-law No. 6-11](#)

Contact the correct office for a copy of the by-law you want to view:

- [Municipality of Middlesex Centre](#) - By-law No. 2011-014
- [Municipality of North Middlesex](#) - By-law No. 9 of 2011
- [Municipality of Southwest Middlesex](#) - By-law No. 2011/011
- [Municipality of Thames Centre](#) - By-law No. 6-2011
- [Township of Lucan Biddulph](#) - By-law No. 07-2011
- [Village of Newbury](#) - By-law No. 111-2011

How do I become a certified food handler?

For food handler certification options, visit:

- Middlesex-London Health Unit
www.healthunit.com/food-handler-certification-program
- Southwestern Public Health
www.swpublichealth.ca/clinics-classes-forms/classes/food-handler-certification

Resources

- Ontario Student Nutrition Program Southwest Region (OSNP): www.osnp.ca/
- Ontario School Food and Beverage Policy (PPM 150):
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/150.html>
- Food Premises Reference Document:
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/reference.aspx
- Southwestern Public Health: www.swpublichealth.ca
- Middlesex London Health Unit: www.healthunit.com

References

Ontario. Ministry of the Attorney General. (1990). *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. H.7. Retrieved from <http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h07>

Ontario. Ministry of the Attorney General. (2017). *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, R.R.O. 1990, Ontario Regulation 493/17: *Food Premises*. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/R17493>