

Guidelines for School Lunchroom Facilities

Physical Recommendations

Areas designated as lunchroom facilities must be in a clean and sanitary condition:

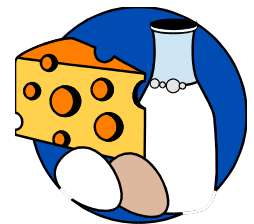
- ✦ Chairs, tables or washable mats (school or parent issue), should be made available for the students' use – the students should not be expected to sit directly on the floor.
- ✦ Science rooms or any other room in which poisons or chemicals are stored should not be used as a lunchroom. If this is not feasible, ensure all chemicals are stored away from tables and/or counters used by the students and that these tables and/or counters are thoroughly washed before each use.
- ✦ The above recommendation also pertains to rooms or areas where animals or birds are kept.
- ✦ Garbage facilities are required and should be adequate for the number of students using the facilities. The containers should be covered at all times and constructed of, or lined with, impervious material. Plastic liners are recommended for use in metal or wooden containers. These containers should be stored away from the eating area and washed after use.
- ✦ A handbasin or sink with liquid soap and disposable towel dispensers should be available in close proximity to the lunchroom facilities. The school washrooms meet this requirement. (Handwashing posters are available from your district Environmental Health Officer).
- ✦ If a microwave oven is being used, then ensure recommended maintenance and cleaning procedures are followed. (Clean seals and interior on a daily basis).



Food Safety Recommendations

Potentially Unsafe Foods are those in which food-poisoning bacterial grow rapidly unless proper heat (above 60°C) or refrigeration (below 4°C) is maintained. Potentially unsafe common foods include:

- ◆ meat, poultry and fish, and salads made from them
- ◆ cooked vegetables, peas, beans
- ◆ cooked cereals (oatmeal, etc.)
- ◆ custards, puddings and whipped cream products
- ◆ milk and milk products
- ◆ shellfish
- ◆ processed meats, (bologna, hot dogs, ham, etc.)
- ◆ gravies
- ◆ meat sandwich spreads
- ◆ all canned perishable food and combination dinners (after opening)
- ◆ eggs, egg products (except dehydrated eggs) and egg salad
- ◆ soft cheeses



Milk & milk products are potentially unsafe foods.

In most cases, schools do not have the facilities to refrigerate lunches. It is recommended that these lunches or sandwiches are made the evening before, are wrapped securely and are refrigerated promptly.

When removing them from the refrigerator the following morning, wrap them in insulating paper or put them in an insulated bag. That way they will remain cold longer than if you had prepared them in the morning and had not insulated them. Some sandwich fillings may even be frozen overnight. A small leak-proof container filled with ice or frozen fruit juice will also help keep foods cold in a lunch box.

Usually Safe Foods are those which may be safely kept at room temperature because food-poisoning bacteria do not grow in them. Mixing a usually safe food with a potentially unsafe food, however, will produce a potentially unsafe mixture. Here is a list of some usually safe foods which are especially useful for lunches that are taken to school:

- ◆ nuts and peanut butter
- ◆ bread, crackers, cookies and cake (no cream)
- ◆ jam, syrup, honey and candy
- ◆ dry cereals and powdered milk
- ◆ raw, cooked and dry fruit
- ◆ raw vegetables
- ◆ pickles, relishes, mustard and catsup
- ◆ hard cheeses
- ◆ hard salami and other dried sausages
- ◆ all foods in cans and flexible pouches, until opened
- ◆ spices



The “Usually Safe Foods” rarely caused food poisoning; but fish, meat and other low-acid foods in cans and flexible pouches must be handled like “Potentially Unsafe Foods” once they have been opened. Practise canned food safety by not using bulging, leaking or badly dented cans. Do not taste or eat contents of a can that spurts when opening, appears bubbly or has an abnormal smell.

The use of mustard and mayonnaise on sandwiches is recommended due to their acidity which helps keep pathogenic bacteria from growing to large enough numbers to cause food poisoning.

Personal Hygiene

Encourage students to thoroughly wash their hands with soap and hot water before handling their food. Instruct them to always wash their hands after using the toilet, smothering a sneeze or when their hands become soiled.

Advise students not to share their lunches. More specifically, they should not eat from the same sandwich or from the same utensil. This will prevent the transfer of bacteria and viruses from one person to another.

Custodial Duties

Lunch areas are to receive maintenance before and after their use:

- ◆ All garbage should be disposed of as often as necessary to prevent nuisances. A nuisance means a condition that is or might become injurious or dangerous to the public health, or that might hinder in any manner the prevention or suppression of disease.
- ◆ All tables, counters or desks used for lunchroom purposes must be cleaned and sanitized frequently. Use a mild solution of bleach and water, which is a common sanitizer (one tablespoon of household bleach to a gallon of water) or another suitable sanitizer. Contact the company that supplies your other chemical products.
- ◆ All equipment must be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition and in proper working order.

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

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