



February 24, 2021

Updated Guidelines for Schools K-12 (COVID-19)



Table of Contents

COVID-19 Public Health Update for K-12 Schools.....	2
Additional Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures	2
District COVID-19 Safety Plan Update.....	3
Additional Environmental Measures	3
Additional Administrative Measures	3
Additional Physical Distancing Measures	4
Additional Personal Measures	5
Additional Personal Protective Equipment Measures	5
Physical Education, Outdoor Programs and School Sports.....	7
Appendix A: Contact Tracing and Public Health Notifications in Schools.....	8
Appendix B: COVID-19 Symptoms, Testing & Return to School.....	9
Appendix C: Supplementary Guidance for School Meal Programs.....	10
Appendix D: What to Do if a Student or Staff Member Develops Symptoms at School	11
Additional Resources	12
<input type="checkbox"/> BCCDC/Ministry COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools	12
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BC Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Setting.....	12
<input type="checkbox"/> BCMEA/CMEBC Guidance for Music Classes in BC During COVID-19.....	12
<input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Protocols for School and District Administrators - Management of Illness and Confirmed Cases.....	12
<input type="checkbox"/> COVID-19 Health and Safety Inspection Checklist	12

COVID-19 Public Health Update for K-12 Schools

UPDATED: February 4, 2021

This document provides a list of updates to be implemented in K-12 schools to minimize the transmission of COVID-19 and maintain a safe and healthy school environment for students, families, and staff.

The infection prevention and exposure control measures in place have been shown to be effective at stopping or limiting transmission of COVID-19 within schools. However, there are areas where renewed attention and focus are needed.

These include:

- Preventing crowding at all times, particularly at the start and end of day.
- Avoiding close face-to-face contact whenever possible.
- Assigning staff to a specific cohort whenever possible.
- Staggering recess, lunch, and class transition times whenever possible.
- Ensuring that the use of masks does not reduce or replace practicing physical distancing and other prevention measures, for both students and staff.
- Ensuring prevention measures are in place in staff-only areas, including break and meeting rooms.
- Implementing music classes according to the [British Columbia Music Educators' Association and the Coalition for Music Education in British Columbia Guidance for Music Classes](#).
- Ensuring physical activity is delivered in line with the guidance in this document.

Additional Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures

The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease describes measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in schools. Control measures at the top are more effective and protective than those at the bottom. By implementing a combination of measures at each level, the risk of COVID-19 is substantially reduced.

This document includes a list of infection prevention and exposure control measures to be implemented in schools according to the hierarchy of control measures, as follows:

- Environmental Measures
- Administrative Measures
- Personal Measures
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The control measures listed in this document are to be implemented in addition to the control measures that are already in place as outlined in each school's Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan. Administrators are to ensure that these control measures are in place by Feb 24th, 2021 and that the school JHSC is involved in the process. Administrators will confirm the implementation of the additional control measures by submitting the school's [Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan Update](#) to the District and will post the update with their current Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan. Any site specific COVID-19 safety items identified that are not addressed in this update will require a [Site Specific COVID-19 Risk Assessment](#) to be conducted and all completed assessments are to be included in the school's Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan.

Administrators are to review the updated Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan with all staff prior to Feb 26th, 2021.

District COVID-19 Safety Plan Update

Additional Environmental Measures

- All mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems have been checked to ensure they are working properly.
- Site Specific COVID Safety Plans will include provisions for when a school or worksite's ventilation system is temporarily compromised (i.e.: during a power outage or ventilation system breakdown)
- Staff have been advised that they should open windows if weather permits and it does not impact the functioning of ventilation systems.
- People have been spread out as much as possible.
- Desks/tables have been arranged to maximize space between staff/students.
- Seating arrangements have been made to avoid students or staff being directly facing one another.
- Consistent seating arrangements are in place.
- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected twice a day, including once during the day. These include doorknobs, light switches, water fountains, toilet handles, tables, desks and chairs, keyboards, sports equipment (i.e.: gym equipment, mats, etc.), music equipment, manipulatives and toys shared by students.
- Frequently touched sports equipment (non-apparatus equipment) that are not able to be cleaned often or at all will require proper hand hygiene practices before and after use.
- Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that are not able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or at all will require proper hand hygiene practices before and after use.
- Frequently touched items that are not easily cleaned are limited to those that support learning, health, and development.
- Re-filling water stations are to be used to re-fill personal containers. These are not to include bathroom sinks or other water sources not typically used for drinking water.

Additional Administrative Measures

- The composition of the cohorts will remain consistent for all activities that occur in schools, including but not limited to learning and breaks (lunch, recess, classroom changes, etc.) during the quarter, semester, or term.
- The composition of the cohorts will be changed as minimally as possible, except where needed to support optimal school functioning. This may include learning, operational or student health and safety considerations.
- Multiple groups of students from different cohorts will only be in the same learning space at the same time if physical distancing can be strictly practiced between people from different cohorts, and there is adequate space available to prevent crowding of those from within the same cohort.
- Staff and students have been advised to reduce the number of close, face-to-face interactions with each other at all times, even if wearing a mask or working within the same cohort. This includes during social interactions in staff areas and during meetings.
- There is a process in place to ensure that Itinerant staff, Teachers On-Call, and visitors are aware of the school's health and safety measures and their responsibility to follow them at all times.
- Visitors will provide active confirmation (e.g., sign in at entry, e-mail before entry, etc.) that they have no symptoms of COVID and have not been required to self-isolate before entering.
- All visitors must wear a non-medical mask when they are inside the school. Exceptions will be made for visitors who cannot tolerate masks for health or behavioural reasons.
- Itinerant staff will be assigned to a single cohort whenever possible.
- Music students within the same cohort will be spaced as far apart as possible.

- Music education will occur in line with guidance developed by the British Columbia Music Educators' Association and the Coalition for Music Education
- People will be spread out as far as possible during physical activity and activities will be adapted wherever possible to reduce physical contact.
- There will be no activities that include prolonged physical contact (i.e., physical contact beyond a brief moment) or crowding.
- Physical education and extracurricular exercise and sport activities will occur outside whenever possible.
- Students and staff participating in indoor high intensity exercise activities in middle and secondary schools will be spaced 2 metres apart. If the activity involves movement, ample space will be available to reduce the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.
- School-based extracurricular activities including sports, arts or special interest clubs will only occur if they can be implemented in line with the guidance for within and outside of cohort interactions, including 2 meters of space available between people from different learning groups (when indoors for elementary, and at all times for middle and secondary)
- Intra-school events that are not an educational activity (like student dances, music, theatrical or dance performances, parties, services, or other occasions where large groups of people may gather) will not be permitted.
- Inter-school events including competitions, tournaments, and festivals, will not occur at this time.
- Community use of school facilities will be in compliance with relevant Orders from the Provincial Health Officer, including the Events and Gathering Order and any other related guidance.
- At least 2 meters of space between people from different learning groups when together for extended periods of time will be maintained (when indoors for elementary, and at all times for middle and secondary).
- Student gatherings (e.g., events that bring staff and students together outside of regular learning activities) will only occur within learning groups and as minimally as possible.
- Staff and students are able move through common spaces - hallways, washrooms, cafeteria, bus waiting areas - without crowding or physical contact.
- Staff and students are not crowded when they enter and leave the school. This includes spaces like hallways, coat rooms and bus waiting areas.

Additional Physical Distancing Measures

- For situations where members of different cohorts interact in the same space for an extended period of time (e.g., beyond 15 minutes), the space will be sufficiently large, and/or have limits on the number of people so that 2 meters of space is available between people from different cohorts.
- For situations where members of different cohorts interact in the same space for transition purposes (e.g., changing between classes), measures are in place (e.g., markings on the floor, staggered transition times), to provide enough space to ensure no physical contact.
- Focus will be on using all available space and preventing crowding or close gatherings.
- Staff not assigned to a single cohort will practice physical distancing when interacting with each cohort.
- Physical distancing will be practiced within staff only spaces, including during break times. In staff only spaces, staff are required to wear masks when indoors, unable to maintain physical distance (2M), and a barrier is not present.
- Meetings, in-service and professional development activities, and other gatherings will be done virtually whenever possible.
- Visual cues (floor markings, posters, etc.) are in place to promote physical distancing in common spaces (e.g., break rooms, copy rooms, etc.).

- Where meetings cannot be held virtually, staff will practice physical distancing; if physical distancing is not possible, participants are to wear masks.
- The number of participants attending non-virtual gatherings and the length of the gathering will be minimized as much as possible.
- Strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times with focus on entry and exit areas, and other places where people may gather, or crowd have been implemented.

Additional Personal Measures

- School Administrators will ensure that staff and other adults entering the school are aware they should not come to school if they are sick or are required to self-isolate.
- School Administrators will ensure parents and caregivers are aware that their child should not come to school if they are sick or are required to self-isolate as per public health direction.
- All staff are required to complete a daily health check prior to reporting to work. School Administrators will support this practice by communicating the requirement for everyone to do a daily health check.
- Parents and students have been reminded of their responsibilities to complete a daily health check.
- If a staff member, student, or other person develops symptoms at school, they will follow the guidance in "What to Do If A Student or Staff Member Develops Symptoms."
- Where a student or staff member cannot be picked up immediately, a space will be provided which is safe and is separated from others. This can include being in the same room as others, as long as the person experiencing illness is at least 2 metres away from others and wears a mask if they are able to.
- If, based on their symptoms a test is recommended, a person must stay home until they receive their test result.
- If a person's test is negative, they will only return to school/work when symptoms improve, and they feel well enough.
- If a person's test is positive, they will follow direction from public health on when they can return to school/work.
- Staff, students, and parents/caregivers are to use the BC Self-Assessment Tool app or call 8-1-1 or their health care provider for guidance.

Additional Personal Protective Equipment Measures

- Staff are aware that masks do not prevent the spread of COVID-19 on their own and are not to be used in place of physical distancing or any other measures noted in this guidance.
- K-12 staff and middle/secondary students will wear a mask indoors at school except when sitting or standing at their seat or workstation (including shared tables) in a classroom or learning environment, or while maintaining physical distance (2M), in a classroom/learning environment, when there is a barrier in place, when eating or drinking or outdoors.
- K-12 staff and middle and secondary students are required to wear masks during Theatre, Film and Dance programs when they are indoors, unable to maintain physical distancing (2m), and a barrier is not present.
- K-12 staff and middle/secondary students will wear a mask on buses.
- Bus drivers are required to wear a non-medical mask, a face covering or a face shield (in which case a non-medical mask should be worn in addition to the face shield) on school buses except while driving or able to maintain physical distance (2M). Exceptions will also be made for bus drivers who cannot tolerate masks for health or behavioural reasons.
- Masks will be worn indoors by middle and secondary students during low-intensity indoor activities where physical distancing cannot be consistently practiced.
- In middle and secondary schools, masks will be worn when singing.
- Masks will be worn by staff during physical education when they are unable to practice physical distancing.

- Face shields will not be worn in place of masks, except for those communicating using lip-reading, when visual facial cues are essential, or when people may be unable to wear a mask.
- Those providing health services in schools will wear a mask (medical or non-medical) when providing services.
- Those supporting students with disabilities and diverse abilities where services will be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with a student for an extended period of time will wear a non-medical mask when providing services.
- Masks are available for those who have forgotten their mask.

Physical Education, Outdoor Programs and School Sports

K-12 teachers are to plan physical activities that:

- Do not involve prolonged physical contact (i.e. physical contact beyond a brief moment) or crowding.
- Teachers are to adapt activities wherever possible to reduce physical contact, including within learning groups.
- Support physical distancing (2m) outside of learning groups.

Programs, activities (e.g. intramurals, sports team practices, games) and sports academies will only occur if:

- Activities do not involve prolonged physical contact (i.e. physical contact beyond a brief moment).
- Schools adapt activities/sports as needed to reduce physical contact.
- No spectators are in attendance and only the minimum number of individuals required to run the activity are present.
- Masks are worn by K-12 staff and other adults when they are indoors, unable to maintain physical distancing (2m), and a barrier is not present.

In Elementary Schools:

- Students within the same learning group are not required to maintain physical distancing, but activities must be delivered in a way that reduces the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.
- Students from different learning groups are required to maintain physical distancing (2M) when indoors. Outdoors activities are to be delivered in a way that reduces the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.

In Middle and Secondary Schools:

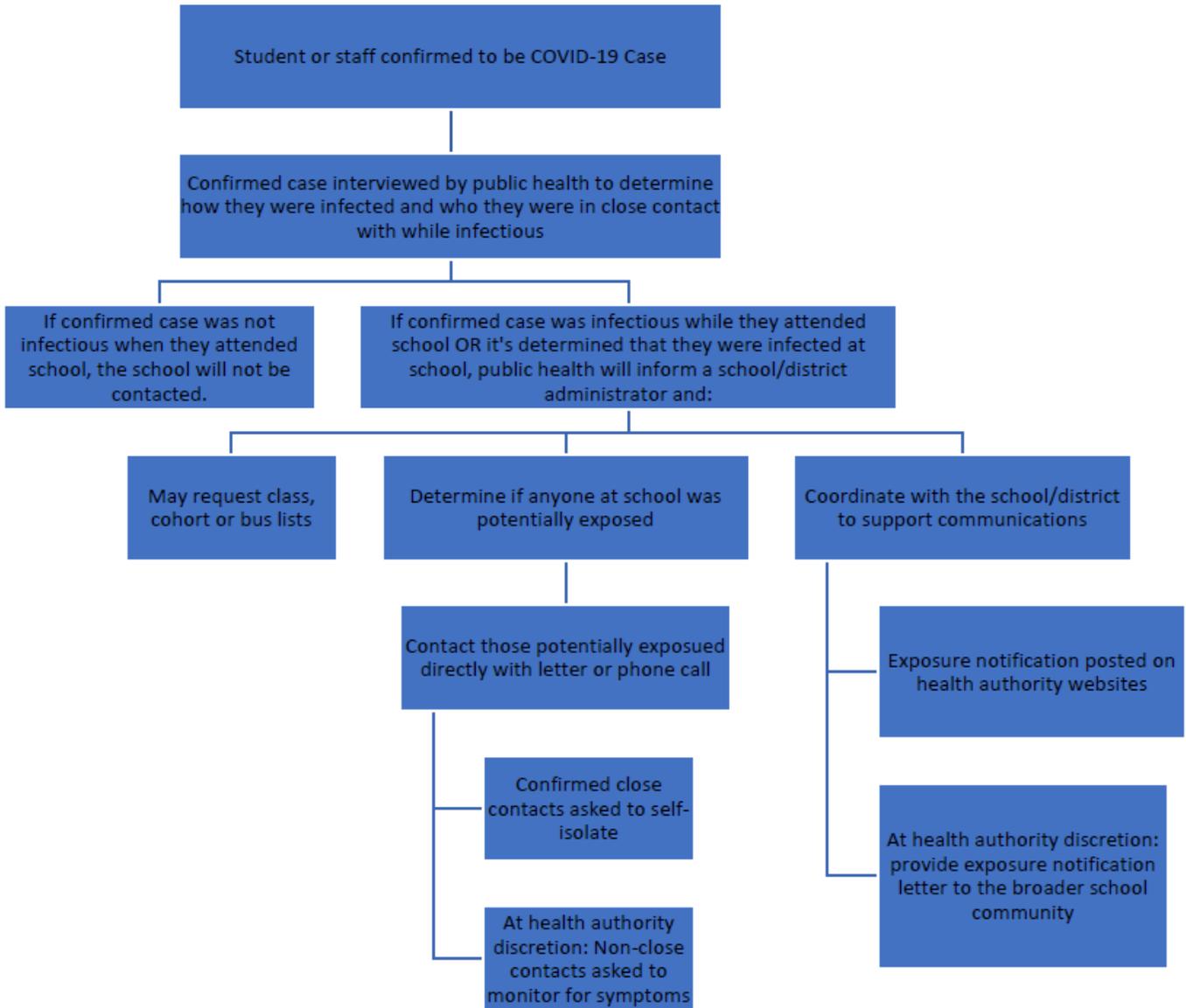
High intensity sport activities:

- For high intensity stationary activities, students and fitness equipment (e.g. stationary bikes, treadmills, weight training equipment) are to be spaced 2 metres apart if indoors, **including for those within the same learning group**. If 2 metre spacing is not available, and the activity cannot be moved outdoors, then the activity must not take place and a different activity should be selected. Masks cannot replace the need for 2 metres between students and/or fitness equipment during high intensity stationary activities indoors.
- For high intensity activities that involve movement (e.g. basketball, soccer), indoors or outdoors:
 - Students within the same learning group** are not required to maintain physical distancing, but the activity must be delivered in a way that reduces the likelihood of physical contact beyond a brief moment.
 - Students from different learning groups** are required to maintain physical distancing (2M).
- Wearing masks during high-intensity sport activities (stationary or with movement, indoors or outdoors) is left to personal choice.

Low intensity sport activities:

- For low intensity activities, middle/secondary students are required to wear masks when they are indoors, unable to maintain physical distancing (2m), and a barrier is not present.
- Shared equipment can be used, provided it is cleaned and disinfected as per the guidelines.
- Students are to be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in sport activities and equipment use.
- Teaching aids are to be disinfected (e.g., clipboards, white boards, pens, plastic bins, etc.)
- Sport activities should be held outside whenever possible.
- No in-person inter-school competitions/events should occur at this time.

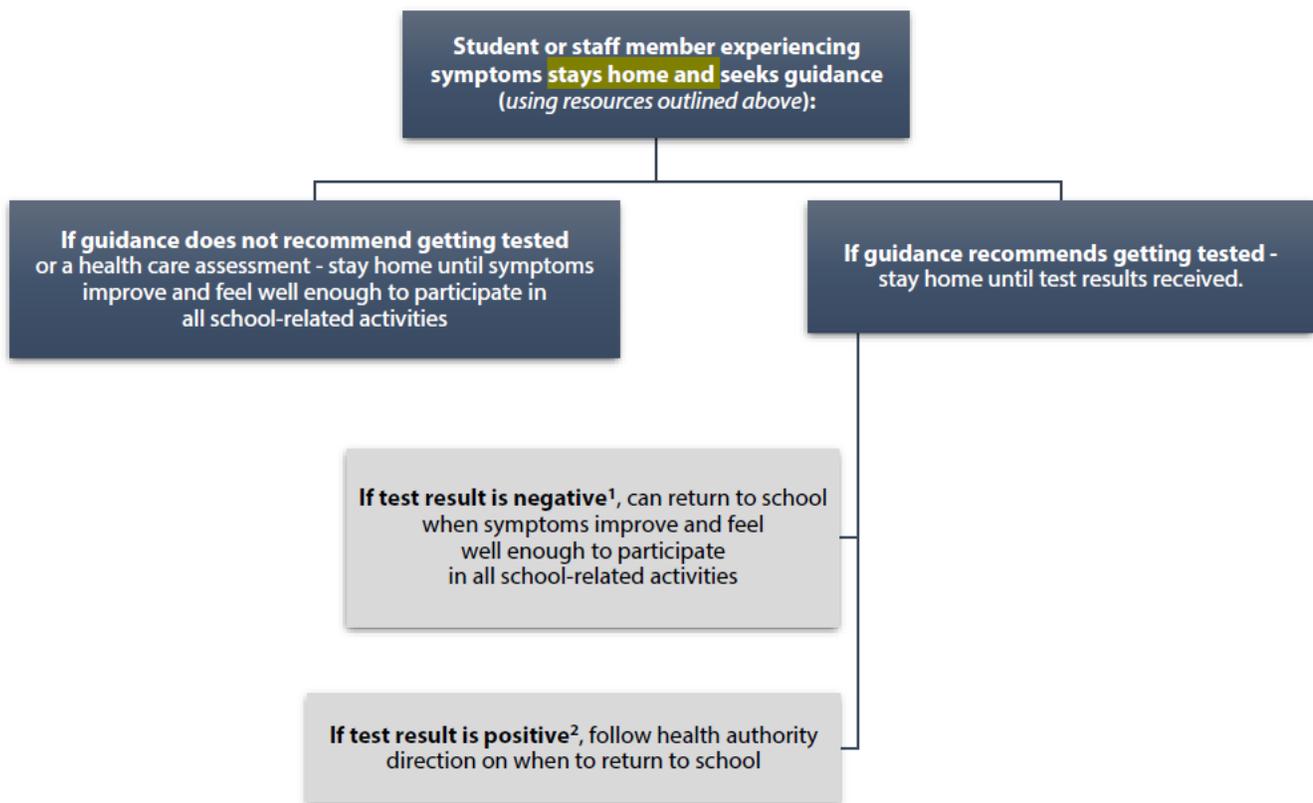
Appendix A: Contact Tracing and Public Health Notifications in Schools



Regional health authorities determine their own notification processes. The notifications used in some regions may differ from what is included here. In all regions, public health ensures anyone who may be a close contact (i.e., those required to self-isolate) is notified. Additional information on contact tracing, self-isolation and close contacts is available from BCCDC.

Appendix B: COVID-19 Symptoms, Testing & Return to School

When a student, staff or other adult can return to school depends on the type of symptoms they experienced and if a COVID-19 test is recommended. See the [K-12 Health Check app](#) and BCCDC [When to get tested for COVID-19](#) for specific guidance. Staff, students and parents/caregivers can also use the BCCDC online [Self-Assessment Tool](#), or call 8-1-1 or their health care provider.



1. Symptoms of common respiratory illnesses can persist for a week or more. Re-testing is not needed unless the person develops a new illness. [BCCDC](#) has information on receiving negative test results.
2. Public health will contact everyone with a positive test. Visit the BCCDC website for more information on [positive test results](#).

Appendix C: Supplementary Guidance for School Meal Programs

This guidance is adapted from the [WorkSafe BC Restaurants, cafes, pubs, and nightclubs: Protocols for returning to operation](#) to support the delivery of school meal programs, breakfast clubs and other food access initiatives that are not regulated under the *Food Premises Regulation*.

General Considerations

- Students from different cohorts can access school meal programs at the same time if necessary (e.g. a morning breakfast program offered only to students who may need it). Physical distance between students from different cohorts should be maintained as much as is practical to do so while ensuring the program can be offered.

Food Delivery and Preparation

- Limit the number of staff/volunteers in a food preparation or eating area at any one time to those necessary to ensure the program can be delivered.
- Inform delivery agents and other volunteers of how to adhere to the school's visitor policy, where food should be delivered to, and what hours food can be accepted at.
- Develop and establish hand hygiene procedures for all staff/volunteers. This includes before and after leaving the food preparation area and using equipment.
- Donated food, including Traditional foods, can continue to be accepted in line with regular food safety precautions for accepting food donations.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Continue with regular cleaning and disinfecting practices for food services.
- Identify high-touch surfaces to ensure they are cleaned and disinfected in line with the guidance in this document and existing food safety practices.
 - High-touch surfaces may include ingredients and containers, equipment such as switches, dials and handles and shared serving utensils if they are used by multiple people.

Food Distribution to Students

- Students should practice hand hygiene before accessing food.
- Schools can continue to provide self-service stations (e.g., salad bar, self-serve breakfast, etc.).
 - Consider pre-plating or serving food directly if students are unable to consistently implement personal measures (e.g. practice regular hand hygiene, not touch their face, etc.) or to prevent gathering or crowding.
- Post signs to remind students to practice hand hygiene and to maintain space from one another.
- If food is served to students, re-usable plates, utensils and containers can be used, with normal cleaning and disinfecting methods for dishwashing implemented.
- Provided food safety precautions are followed, leftover food can be sent home with students.

Appendix D: What to Do if a Student or Staff Member Develops Symptoms at School

<p><i>If a Student Develops Symptoms of Illness At School</i></p>	<p><i>If a Staff Member Develops Symptoms of Illness At School</i></p>
<p>Staff must take the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Immediately separate the symptomatic student from others in a supervised area. 2. Contact the student’s parent or caregiver to pick them up as soon as possible. 3. Where possible, maintain a 2-metre distance from the ill student. If not possible, staff should wear a mask if available and tolerated, or use a tissue to cover their nose and mouth. 4. Provide the student with a mask or tissues to cover their coughs or sneezes. Throw away used tissues as soon as possible and perform hand hygiene. 5. Avoid touching the student’s body fluids (e.g., mucous, saliva). If you do, practice diligent hand hygiene. 6. Once the student is picked up, practice diligent hand hygiene. 7. Staff responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the student was separated and any areas recently used by them (e.g., classroom, bathroom, common areas). <p>Parents or caregivers must pick up their child as soon as possible if they are notified their child is ill.</p>	<p>Staff should go home as soon as possible.</p> <p>If unable to leave immediately:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Symptomatic staff should separate themselves into an area away from others. 2. Maintain a distance of 2 metres from others. 3. Use a tissue or mask to cover their nose and mouth while they wait to be picked up. 4. Staff responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the staff member was separated and any areas used by them (e.g., classroom, bathroom, common areas).

Students and staff should return to school according to the guidance under the Returning to School After Sickness sections of the [BCCDC/Ministry Guidance for K-12 Schools](#). A health-care provider note should not be required for students or staff to return.

Additional Resources

- [BCCDC/Ministry COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)
- [BC Provincial COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Setting](#)
- [BCMEA/CMEBC Guidance for Music Classes in BC During COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Protocols for School and District Administrators - Management of Illness and Confirmed Cases](#)
- [COVID-19 Health and Safety Inspection Checklist](#)