



RETURN TO HEALTH MEALTIME GUIDANCE

Risk level for COVID spread increases when face masks must be removed for eating. During mealtime, schools must take every measure to maximize physical distancing to limit close contact while face masks are removed. Any close contact exposure (within 6 feet for 15+ minutes) to COVID during unmasked activities, such as eating, do not qualify for modified quarantine. These types of close contacts are required to quarantine.

Indoor Cafeteria Seating:

- Physical distancing will be maximized between students to the extent practicable
- Seats should be staggered so students don't sit directly in front of each other
- When possible (i.e. in elementary), seating charts should be used during scheduled meals, such as lunchtime
- When eating breakfast, where student attendance is not scheduled, maximize physical distance to 6 feet if possible to limit close contact between students
- Use additional spaces outside of the cafeteria for mealtime, such as the gymnasium or outdoors to facilitate distancing.
- If indoor meal times are paired with recess or outdoor time, consider having half the group eat while the other half has recess to assist with physical distancing
- Eating should be completed quickly and then face masks placed back on
- Masks should be worn after students have finished eating or when talking with classmates
- Hand hygiene must be practiced before and after eating

Outdoor Eating Spaces:

- When possible, meals should be eaten outdoors while practicing distancing
- Maximize physical distance to 6 feet or more if possible to limit close contact between students
- Allow students to eat under shady areas, grassy spaces or other non traditional spaces to allow for maximum physical distancing
- Ensure garbage cans are placed accordingly to accommodate new eating spaces
- Use carpet squares or mats to extend outdoor seating options
- Add additional outdoor tables when possible

Shared Items/Disinfecting:

- Given very low risk of transmission from surfaces and shared objects, there is no need to limit food service approaches to single use items and packaged meals
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Surfaces that come in contact with food should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after meals

Supervision:

- Additional funding has been allocated to increase mealtime supervision
- Ensure supervision staff spreads out over the span of all meal spaces (indoor and outdoor) to reinforce health and safety protocols