

Ontario Student Nutrition Programs

Tips for how to choose, transport and store food safely

Choosing/accepting food for school program:

- Offer and serve food and food products from inspected sources including grocery stores, wholesalers and distributors, food services (e.g., caterers), farmer's markets and community food hubs. Contact your Lead Agency to determine whether food sources meet program requirements.
- Check best before dates when selecting and serving food.
- Select or accept produce that is fresh, not wilted or overripe. Do not offer vegetables and fruits that are partly spoiled (spots or soft mushy parts), or stale bread and baked goods.
- Only use cans that are free from rust and dents and are not leaking or swollen.
- Shop for cold foods last.
- Do not accept food from an emergency food source, such as a food bank.
- Avoid serving foods with a high risk of causing a food-borne illness such as: cold deli salads made with egg or dairy; home canned food items; home cooked or baked food items; foods which are not in their original container; food packages which have seals broken
- Prepare food for your SNP in an appropriate facility. Foods prepared at home are not permitted in your SNP under the Ontario Food Premises Regulation.

Transporting food from store to school:

- Keep re-usable grocery bags clean and wash them regularly (if used).
- Keep raw food away from cooked or ready to eat foods.
- Transport food in a clean, pet-free vehicle and separate from contaminants such as washer fluid, and other toxic and poisonous substances
- Take food directly from the store to the school
- Keep perishable foods cold during transport using a cooler and thermometer. Bacteria can multiply rapidly in foods that are left in the temperature danger zone - between 4°C (40°F) and 60°C (140°F) – for longer than 2 hours.



Storing food at school:

- Always wash your hands before handling food.
- Refrigerate perishable food immediately.
- Place raw meat, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator so that raw meat juice can't drip onto other foods
- Cover all foods in the refrigerator.
- Store non-perishable food at least 15 cm off the ground in a clean, dry place – such as cupboards or shelves
- Date all food when it is received. Make sure that older foods are used up first to maintain nutrition and freshness.

Schools that provide meal or snack programs are considered “food premises” and are covered by provincial food safety laws (*Ontario Food Premises Regulation 463*). Refer to the Ontario Food Premises Regulation 463 (O.Reg 463/17) of the Health Promotion and Protection Act to find out more about preparing, storing and serving food using public health practices.

For more information:

- Refer to Section 5 of the Student Nutrition Program Nutrition Guidelines (2016): Safe Food Handling, Storage and Preparation.
- Contact your **local public health unit** or check their website for more information and resources about hand washing, safe food handling and provincial food safety laws
- The ***In Good Hands*** online safe food handling course is based on Canadian content as well as Ministry of Health guidelines for the province of Ontario. The course is also available in French. <http://www.ingoodhands.ca/index.html>
- The Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education website (<http://www.canfightbac.org>) has lots of information for the general public about food safety issues such as food selection, handling, preparation and storage and food-borne illness. The web-site has facts sheets and other resources that you can download for free.
- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has more information on date labelling on pre-packaged foods <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/food/information-for-consumers/fact-sheets-and-infographics/date-labelling/eng/1332357469487/1332357545633>