

## Guidance for Food Banks and Community Based Emergency Food Programs on Food Safety

Food banks and other emergency food programs are vital to the community. Food banks can take steps to provide safe food to the community while minimizing the risk by following public health recommendations.

### How it spreads

Coronaviruses are spread primarily from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. It spreads between people who are in close contact (less than two metres). Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food or food packaging. Other products such as water bottles, hygiene products and clothes would also be low risk for transmitting the novel coronavirus.

### What you should do:

- Advise staff/volunteers to stay at home if they are sick, or have flu-like symptoms.
- Ensure staff/volunteers are washing their hands using soap and water for 20 seconds, then drying with a paper towel. This should be done:
  - before starting work
  - before handling food
  - after handling waste
  - after cleaning
  - after using the toilet
  - after blowing nose, sneezing or coughing
  - after eating, drinking or smoking
  - when you get home and after putting away groceries
- Provide liquid soap and paper towels at all handwashing sinks in the food bank and washroom facilities.
- If possible, provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers available to staff/volunteers and clients where there is no food preparation and hand washing is not available.
- Regularly clean and sanitize all food contact surfaces (equipment, utensils, customer/client tables) after each use or as often as necessary. Sanitizers such as chlorine, quaternary ammonium (quats) and iodine are effective sanitizers on food contact surfaces. Use as directed on the product label.
- Disinfect frequently touched surfaces (i.e. doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks) often, at least twice per day or more often based on use with disinfectants that are appropriate for the surface, following label instructions.
- Avoid touching your face, mouth, eyes and nose.

## Follow social distancing strategies:

- Avoid greetings that involve touching, such as handshaking.
- Minimize prolonged exposure with others (more than 10 minutes), and avoid close contact (less than two metres) between other individuals in public spaces, inside or outside buildings.
- Allow only so many people inside the facility to ensure a two-metre distance between people can be maintained.
- Suspend all non-essential programs.
- Minimize client food handling by providing food hampers for pick up.
- Avoid sharing drinks, food, cigarettes and other personal items.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow, use a tissue and wash hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after coughing or sneezing.
- Stay at home, except for essential services and social distancing exercise.

**Remind employees/volunteers/clients that anyone who becomes sick with a fever and cough at the food bank should go home immediately and call Health Links–Info Santé- at: 204-788-8200.**

## Other resources:

Manitoba Health – Health Protection Unit information sheet for food operators:  
[www.manitoba.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/ph\\_foodoperation\\_2020.pdf](http://www.manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/ph_foodoperation_2020.pdf)

For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Manitoba public health website at:  
[www.manitoba.ca/covid19](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19)

For additional preparedness details, visit Government of Canada:  
[www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html)

Link to Toronto Health Unit website:  
[www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/948e-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Food-Banks-and-Donation-Centres.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/948e-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Food-Banks-and-Donation-Centres.pdf)

Hand hygiene and cough etiquette posters are available in 32 different languages:  
<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/health-providers/coronavirus-resources/hand-hygiene-posters/>  
<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/health-providers/coronavirus-resources/cough-etiquette-posters/>

If you need to speak with a Public Health Inspector, please call 204-945-4204  
or email: [healthprotection@gov.mb.ca](mailto:healthprotection@gov.mb.ca).

For health questions or more information on respiratory illness, call Health Links–Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll free).