



COVID-19 – Guidance for Food Banks and Community Based Emergency Food Programs

Food banks and other community emergency food programs are vital to support the structurally disadvantaged communities among us. As a community, we can take steps to provide safe food while minimizing the risk by following these recommendations.

How COVID-19 Spreads

Coronaviruses are spread primarily from person-to-person through respiratory droplets between people who are in close contact (less than 2 metres). Transmission can also occur through contaminated surfaces. **Currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with food or food packaging. Other products that are being distributed such as water bottles, hygiene products and clothes would also be low risk for transmitting COVID-19.**

What You Should Do:

1. For COVID-19 specific information on food handling and preparation, please review this fact sheet by Manitoba Health:
https://gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/ph_foodoperation_2020.pdf
2. Follow social distancing strategies:
 - Avoid greetings that involve touching, such as handshakes.
 - **Minimize prolonged (more than 10 minutes), close (less than two metres) contact between individuals in public spaces, inside or outside buildings.**
 - **Use high visibility markers, such as pylons or tape, to maintain 2 metres distance between clients who are standing in line waiting for food and/or donations.**
 - Switch food operations to take-out or pre-packaged hampers only.
 - Avoid sharing drinks, food and cigarettes.
 - The routine use of facemasks by staff/volunteers is NOT recommended.

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

For the most up-to-date information on COVID-19, visit the Manitoba public health website at:
www.gov.mb.ca/covid19

Find provincial COVID-19 resources and posters here: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/>

Find additional guidance from Toronto Public Health specific to food banks and donation centres here:
<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/948e-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Food-Banks-and-Donation-Centres.pdf>

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