



# PUBLIC HEALTH MEMO

## COVID-19

### COVID-19: Guidance for Schools on Celebrations with Food

COVID-19 safety guidelines are making many re-think how we celebrate festivities, especially when it comes to food. As per the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit's (WECHU) "Safe Return To School" Toolkit (Pg. 34), all **schools should be operating under a 'no-sharing' policy when it comes to food items.** This includes all foods brought in by parents and/or guardians for the purpose of sharing with the student's class or cohort, even if pre-packaged.

Reimagining the way we celebrate festivities can provide an opportunity to align our practices with what is being taught in our classrooms. Often the foods and drinks associated with common celebrations (e.g., Halloween, Valentine's Day, Easter, etc.) are high in sugar, saturated fat, salt, and low in nutrients needed for children's healthy development. Instead, schools can consider ideas that adhere to COVID-19 safety protocols while promoting nutrition and physical activity.

#### Celebrating safely in schools:

- Before planning an event in your school, consider if food is really necessary. There are many other ways to celebrate, including:
  - Ask parents/guardians to donate to your school's student nutrition program (or related program) instead of sending in treats. These programs can use the money to provide a nutritious snack or meal to celebrate.
  - Host games in the classroom or designated outdoor area that gets students moving and physically active.
  - Ask students to come dressed in specific colours to match the festivities (e.g., red for Valentine's Day, etc.).
  - Host desk-decorating, drawing, or story writing contests.

As we enter a season of festivities, schools should aim to promote wholesome foods and healthy behaviours through a healthy school culture. Our schools practices should always allow students to put the healthy habits they learn about in class into practice. To help you communicate this with your school community, we have put together some communication resources for you to use.