

Celebrations are so important for mental health and well-being. Here are some tips from local public health to support safer (and healthier!) celebrations in school or childcare. Please also consider the most recent guidance from ministries and school and childcare policies as you plan activities. As local situations change, these tips may need to be adjusted.

Share treats safely!

- Consider non-food items for treats.
- Staff and volunteers must wash their hands before and after handling prepackaged food and non-food items.
- When giving out gifts or treats, do not leave items in a bucket or bowl for everyone to grab. Consider using tongs, long spoons, or other similar tools to hand out items. Another option is for staff to hand out items while keeping physical distancing from students for example they can set up a table with pre-bagged items to keep distance from students.
- For celebrations where items are exchanged, every student should be provided with or should bring their own labelled envelope, bag, or container of sorts to collect items.
- For food, invite families to consider more nutritious options.
- Check out these [healthy eating tips from Bright Bites](#) (note: some may need adjustment to be consistent with COVID-19 requirements)
- Have parents check with the school about allergies that may affect food selection.
- No homemade food should be sent in; ask that only prepackaged food from a store be offered. Staff and students are not to share food.
- See [School Meal and Snack Programs during COVID-19](#) for more tips on safer food distribution within the pandemic.

Follow general infection prevention practices!

- Review the checklist [COVID-19 Preparedness and Prevention in Elementary and Secondary \(K-12\) Schools](#)
- Staff and students should wash hands thoroughly or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, before and after handling items, as well as before and after eating.
- Continue to practice physical distancing.
- Ensure everyone has done the daily COVID-19 screening and does not attend if feeling unwell.
- Reinforce the use of a face mask with staff and students as needed. A costume mask is not a substitute for a face covering and should not be worn over a face covering as it may make it difficult to breathe.
- Ensure distancing between cohorts and as much as possible within cohorts when masks are removed.
- Consider potential need for eye protection for staff, if not able to distance from others.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Continue to follow cohorting and record-keeping guidelines.

- Weather permitting, keep windows and doors open if this can be done safely.

Head outside!

- COVID risk is much lower outdoors and being outdoors gives students a chance to take a mask break. Remember to encourage distancing between cohorts as much as possible.
- Bringing a celebration outside in the fresh air boosts mental health and gives opportunities to build in physical activity.
- Host an outdoor nature hike or an outdoor at-your-own-pace scavenger hunt. Clues can be placed throughout a school yard and students work in teams or as cohorted classes to complete the hunt.
- Your local health unit has sidewalk stencils available for schools to use. Borrow them for your school yard celebration!
- [This Play Guide](#) (EN only) offers tips for outdoor games based on level of community or school COVID risk. The [Thrive Outside resources](#) may also be helpful for educators interested in learning more about outdoor play.

Connect virtually.

- If classrooms have individual zoom or similar technology, have each class call in to a school-wide virtual assembly, such as a Remembrance Day ceremony, Christmas concert, etc.
- Consider creative alternatives to traditional celebrations like a virtual party with video chats with other classes or host a virtual costume parade.

Regardless how your school chooses to celebrate, don't forget:

- Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Physical distancing
- Screening
- Masks and eye protection
- Cleaning and disinfecting
- Cohorting
- Ventilation