

## Important Things To Remember

- Hands are the main source of germ transmission. Be sure to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often.
- Make sure to clean your hands when alternating between feeding two residents at the same time to prevent cross contamination.
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment as needed when you expect a risk of splashes or coming in contact with bodily fluids.
- Gloves should be used when handling ready-to-eat food.
- To prevent aspiration, keep residents upright after feeding.
- Daily oral hygiene and oral care will prevent colonization of the mouth, decreasing pneumonia risk.
- Do not come to work when sick - follow your facility's policy for when to report illnesses, such as gastrointestinal, to your supervisor or applicable representative.



April 2025

## Contact Us

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## Resources

**AHRQ - A Unit Guide to Infection**

**Prevention for Long-Term Care Staff**

<https://www.ahrq.gov/hai/quality/tools/cauti-ltc/modules/resources/guides/infection-prevent.html#hygiene>

**CDC- Nursing Home Infection Prevention Course**

[www.train.org/cdctrain/training\\_plan/3814](http://www.train.org/cdctrain/training_plan/3814)

**CDC- Hand Hygiene**

<https://www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/hcp/clinical-safety/index.html>

**AHCA/NCAL - Communal Dining Guidance**

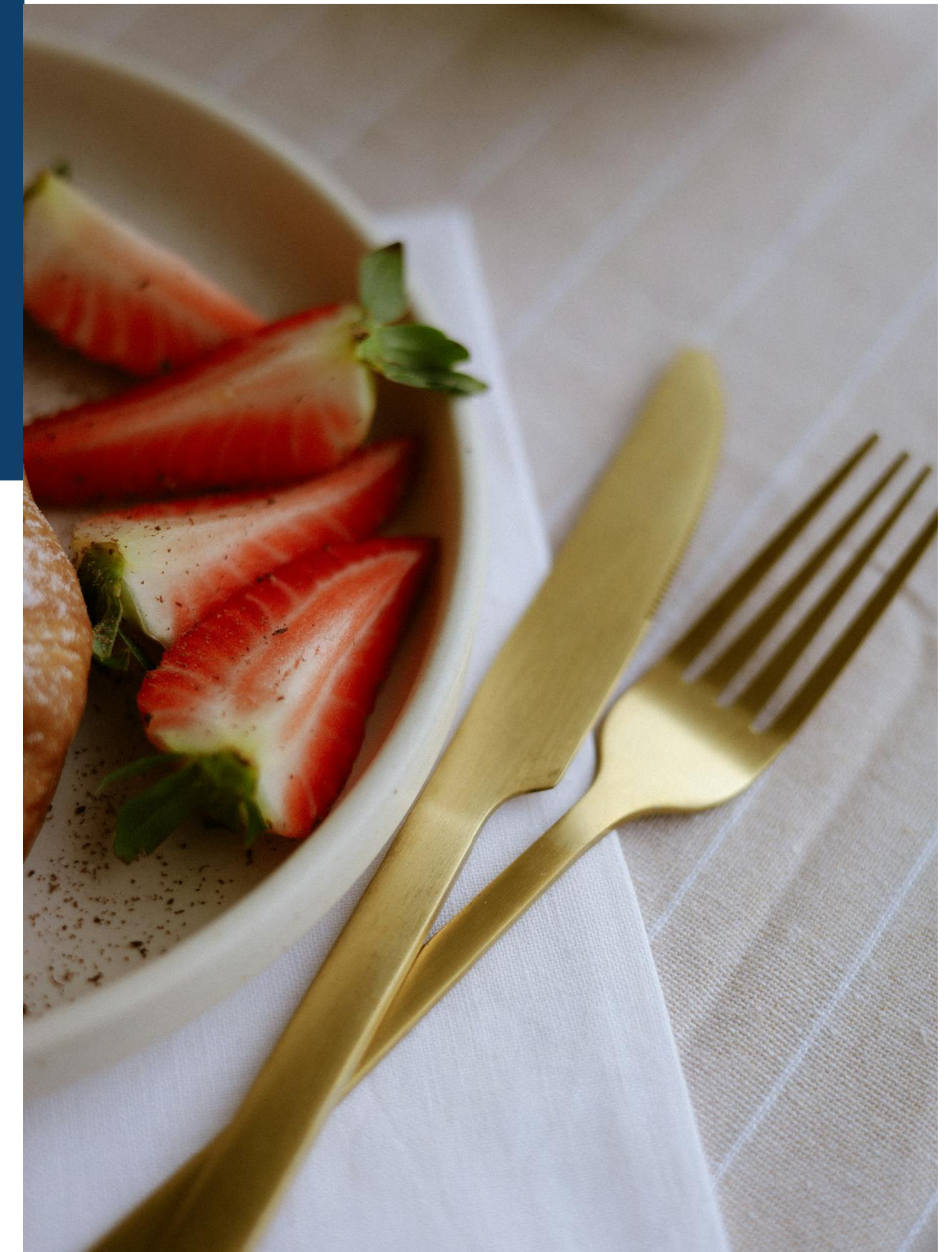
<https://www.ahcancal.org/Survey-Regulatory-Legal/Emergency-Preparedness/Documents/COVID19/Communal-Dining-Approaches.pdf>

**CDC - Project Firstline**

<https://www.cdc.gov/project-firstline/index.html>

NORTH  
**Dakota** Be Legendary.

Health & Human Services



**Infection Prevention during  
Mealtimes for Health Care  
Workers**

**Hand hygiene, aspiration  
prevention, and  
appropriate glove use.**



## Infection Prevention during Mealtimes

Following Infection Prevention and Control Practices is a very important part of preventing infections and illnesses, even during mealtimes and when helping feed residents. There are several factors that can attribute to an increased risk of infections or illnesses during mealtimes, such as:

- Inappropriate hand hygiene
- Inappropriate glove use
- Poor oral hygiene and aspiration prevention techniques

### Hand Hygiene

Hand hygiene refers to the practice of removing or killing germs on hands so that the germs do not spread to other people or surfaces. Keeping your hands clean is the most important thing that can be done to prevent infections.

Numerous organisms, such as bacteria and viruses, can be introduced into our systems through the oral route when eating or drinking. If not following appropriate hand hygiene techniques and appropriate glove use, mealtime staff may contaminate food and surfaces which can then be used on residents to potentially make them ill.



During mealtimes, hand hygiene should be performed:

- Before and after feeding a resident.
- When alternating between feeding two residents.
- If hands are visibly soiled, such as with saliva.
- After touching a contaminated item, like a used napkin.
- Before entering and after leaving a resident's room to drop off a tray.
- Before and after removing personal protective equipment (i.e. gloves).

### Glove Use

Personal protective equipment (PPE) protects you from contact with blood, body fluids, and other potentially infectious materials (such as saliva, mouth sores, trace blood in mouth) that may contain germs that can cause infection. PPE is used to protect both staff and residents.

Staff should take appropriate precautions with masks, gloves, eye protection and gowns (as available) given the risk for these residents to cough while eating.

Gloves are necessary when handling ready-to-eat foods, such as sandwiches, or when a resident is in transmission-based precautions.

## Oral Hygiene and Aspiration Prevention

Aspiration is the process when food, liquids, saliva, or other items are brought into the trachea and lungs, instead of being swallowed. This may lead to pneumonia, which is an infection of the lungs.

Most bacterial pneumonias develop when organisms that are colonizing the nose, mouth, and throat and are contained in saliva are aspirated. Dry mouth and poor oral hygiene can lead to an increased number of bacteria colonized in the mouth, which leads to a higher risk of infection if aspirated.

Strategies to minimize the risk of aspiration and prevent pneumonia infections, include:

- Daily brushing of teeth and gums
- Routine oral rinses
- Adequate hydration
- Residents should be positioned in an upright position when eating and remain upright immediately after meals.

