



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

POLICY STATEMENT

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Food and Drink for Staff in the Emergency Department

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Understanding that staff may have limited access to proper breaks depending on patient volume and acuity, as well as the importance of hydration and nutrition during a clinician's shift, the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) strongly advocates for organizations to permit and support policies that allow for food and beverages to be kept and ingested by staff members at their workstations in the emergency department (ED).

While food and beverages should be permitted at ED workstations, relevant policies should consider:

- Food and beverages should be stored separately (eg, refrigerators, cupboards) from areas designated for specimen storage and processing. Similarly, specimen handling must be performed at the bedside, in dirty utility rooms, or dedicated areas separate from workstations where food and drink may be consumed.
- Food and beverages should not be consumed in areas dedicated to the storage or administration of medications or specimen collection/processing.
- Staff must be responsible for handling food and beverages with appropriate care to prevent spills that may damage electronic equipment, sensitive documents, or other materials on the desktops.
- Appropriate hand hygiene must be performed before and after patient encounters or handling of specimens, as well as before and after touching or consuming food or beverage.