

Virtual Event Guide



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What is “Hello, Let’s Eat!”?

“Hello, Let’s Eat!” is a project with the goal of bringing neighbours together over the act of sharing food. Over the last two years, Edmontonians have been able to borrow place settings and food service equipment at no cost to them. The program encourages community members to share meals together in order to get to know one another and learn about what connects us.

People with strong ties to their community are not only happier, but are healthier and live longer. Edmontonians are less likely to experience stress, depression, loneliness and isolation if they feel connected to a supportive community. The importance of social support networks cannot be understated. As one of the determinants of health, social support is a key piece of the puzzle for overall mental and physical wellness. This social support network is made up of friends and family, but also neighbours and others in our community.

Research suggests that those who eat socially more often feel happier and are more satisfied with life, are more trusting of others, are more engaged with their local communities. It is for this reason that “Hello, Let’s Eat!” began.

This is a project of the “Hello, How Are You?” Campaign. The Campaign encourages Edmontonians to get connected to their communities to help prevent social isolation.



The Virtual Guide

Connecting face-to-face is always the best option for getting to know our neighbours and others in the community. However, due to requirements in place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize that this is not always possible.

When our ability to connect in person is limited, it is that much more important that we find ways to continue connecting socially and maintain a good network of support. Technology offers a great opportunity for us to connect when we can’t do the in-person gatherings we all enjoy. We have been inspired by seeing Edmontonians experimenting with virtual events as they stay social during an increasingly isolating time.

For some, hosting a virtual event may be straightforward, but for others it may be difficult to imagine where to start. We created this guide to encourage Edmontonians to continue with the spirit of “Hello, Let’s Eat!”—now online!

Get Started with your Virtual Event

Hosting an online “Hello, Let’s Eat!” event doesn’t require much. There are a few things you may want to consider to make sure your event goes smoothly for everyone involved.



The Guest List

We encourage you to think outside the box with your guest list. Rather than gravitating towards the same group of friends you chat with regularly, think about gathering neighbours or tapping into different groups to make new connections.

- Consider keeping the size of your group to around 10 people for your first event. This will make facilitating the conversation easier as you get comfortable with the technology you choose.

Send an invitation for your Hello, Let’s Eat! (Online) event well in advance.

- Include instructions on how to use the platform of your choosing.
- Include tips such as using the mute button when you’re not speaking.



Choosing a Platform

There are many different options available for hosting a virtual event. We have summarized a few of these options and some of their considerations below:

- **Google Hangouts:** Use your Google account to hang out with up to twenty-five guests. You can video chat on a desktop, or using the app.
- **Zoom:** Create a free account with Zoom and invite up to 100 people for 40 minutes of hang out time, or take advantage of unlimited time with chats under five people.
Limitations: Security flaws have been reported in Zoom’s application. Although this should not be a concern for personal meetings, there is an option to set a password under the meeting options menu in the program.
- **Skype:** With the Skype video chat app, group video calling for up to 50 people is

available for free on just about any mobile device, tablet or computer.

- **FaceTime:** Group FaceTime will let you chat with up to 32 people at the same time on your iPhone, iPad or Mac.

Limitations: You must have an Apple ID or device to participate in a FaceTime call.



Facilitate the Conversation

Sitting in on a virtual dinner party can be awkward at first, as it is new for many people. Be prepared to prompt the conversation if it isn't happening naturally. This is where the food comes in! Food can be used as a great conversation starter.

- Do a quick round of introductions so everyone is familiar with the group.
- Be attentive to your guests and who may be sitting back. Try to engage those who are more reluctant to participate as much as possible.
- Have some questions prepared for lulls in the conversation.
 - Use the “Engage” cards from the Hello, How Are You? Board Game for conversation starters.

Be Creative

Remember, this is supposed to be fun! Here are some ideas to get you started on your “Hello, Let’s Eat!” online event:

1. Have everyone cook a dish that has meaning to them and share their story.
2. Cooking challenge: decide on a dish that everyone is tasked to make and then showcase their dish and share how it went.
3. Mystery ingredients challenge: Pick three (3) ingredients everyone must make a dish with. Similar to the show “Chopped”.
4. Pick a theme for your event (tropical vacation, comfort food, summer BBQ, etc.)
5. Order takeout from your favourite restaurant and share with the group why you love it there.
6. Prepare a discussion question before the gathering. Send it out in advance so people can think about it a bit.
7. Play the “Hello, How Are You?” Board Game!
 - Or just use the “Engage” cards as conversation starters

Additional Resources & Information

Abundant Community Edmonton

Abundant Community Edmonton is a grassroots initiative fostering neighbour-to-neighbour relationships. The goal is to cultivate a culture of care and connection, increased sense of belonging and inclusion, and ultimately create a more healthy and livable city—one block at a time.

- Visit edmonton.ca/abundantcommunity for more information

Block Parties

Host a neighbourhood block party as an opportunity for people to meet and get to know each other.

- Visit edmonton.ca/residential_neighbourhoods/neighbourhoods/block-parties.aspx for more information and to download a block party kit.

Virtual Programming for Seniors

For a list of online and phone-based activities offered by Edmonton seniors organizations visit www.seniorscouncil.net/news-and-events.

Edmonton Public Libraries

Edmonton Public Libraries offers a number of in-person and online programs for all ages to enjoy. Visit www.epl.ca to learn more.

211

Call 211 for more information on community resources and programming.