



## Introduction

This tip sheet is for employers, employees, and guests of restaurants as an overview of potential hazards in the workplace due to COVID-19 and related control measures.

For general COVID-19 prevention practices, refer to these CCOHS documents:

[COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers](#)

[COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#)

[COVID-19 Health and Safety Resources](#)

Additional information can be found in the CCOHS COVID-19 Tip Sheet on Outdoor Dining.

In all cases, guidance from local public health authorities must be followed and general COVID-19 prevention practices should be implemented, as outlined in: [Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#).

## Consider the Risks

The risk of contracting COVID-19 increases in situations where people are working in closed spaces (with poor ventilation), crowded places and around people from other households. Risk is higher in settings where these factors also include activities such as close-range conversations, singing, shouting or heavy breathing (e.g., exertion).

Working at a restaurant exposes workers to many of the above situations. COVID-19 transmission during these activities depends on the setting, the number of people, physical proximity, duration and type of interactions, and the effectiveness of health and safety measures put in place.

Employers should consider the following:

- How to protect guests and employees? Conduct risk assessments of all job tasks and interactions with others.
- What type of setting is it? Indoor settings can accumulate viruses when crowded or poorly ventilated. Outdoor spaces have natural ventilation and are lower risk.
- How many people will employees interact with and how close are the physical interactions? Transmission risks increase with close and frequent contact.
- What kind of interactions will employees have? Train staff to keep the greatest distance possible (at least 2 metres) from others. Implement precautions when staff need to be within 2 metres of a co-worker or guest.
- How long are the interactions? Evidence indicates that the person-to-person spread is more likely with longer contact. Train employees to keep interactions as short as possible.
- Do employees and guests frequently have contact with high touch surfaces or objects? Remove objects from service or modify processes to be contactless and increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection.
- Are masks required for public places in your jurisdiction? Determine when and where masks must be worn (e.g., required unless drinking or eating). Check local public health authorities' requirements and enforce them in your restaurant.
- How many people are allowed in the restaurant at one time? Follow your jurisdictional occupancy limits to determine the number of guests allowed in your workplace. These limits may change as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.
- Are you anticipating or observing crowds in your restaurant? Make operational changes to avoid crowds as much as possible. Consider switching to accept reservations only or offer curbside pickup areas.

Each restaurant has a unique layout. It is important for employers to assess the risks of COVID-19 transmission for their specific space and implement appropriate hazard controls using the [hierarchy of controls](#) (i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering controls, administrative controls, personal protective equipment (PPE)). Use a layered approach when implementing the chosen combination of risk controls.

Be careful not create new workplace hazards or negatively impact existing safety controls. Have a COVID-19 safety plan to identify and implement control measures in response to hazards. The plan should address as many aspects as possible. Review, communicate, post, and update the plan on a regular basis.

## Elimination and Engineering Controls

Implement these controls to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace. The priority should be having as few people as possible in the workplace while maintaining safety protocols.

- Provide hand washing stations or hand sanitizer dispensers (always with minimum 60% alcohol content) in high traffic areas such as employee and main entrances, exits, service counters, breakrooms, elevators, front desk,



and vehicle loading areas.

- [Ventilate](#) indoor spaces appropriately; the more enclosed the space the more ventilation will be necessary. Seek advice from an HVAC specialist on ways to increase indoor/outdoor air exchanges per hour, reduce or eliminate recirculated air, and on available options for air filtration and disinfection (e.g., room or system UV germicidal lighting)
- Make sure fans in washrooms exhaust to the outside are fully functional, operating at maximum capacity, and remain on.
- Ensure that air circulation or cooling fans are not directing air flow from person to person.
- Modify queuing and waiting areas. Install stanchions or floor markings, at least 2 metres (minimum safe distance) apart in all directions to keep people apart and indicate where to stand.
- Install barriers to separate employees from guests where possible and appropriate, make sure not to block aisles or exits (i.e., emergency escape). Barriers should be appropriately sized and positioned to block respiratory droplets from being carried from person to person. Clean and disinfect barriers at least daily.
- Consider these facility renovations and upgrades:
  - Motion activated automatic doors.
  - Hand motion activated automatic faucets.
  - Automatic flushing toilets and urinals.
  - Hand or foot activated soap, towel, and sanitizer dispensers.
  - Replace soft surfaces with hard surfaces which are more easily disinfected (i.e., change carpet to tile, cushioned benches to wooden or plastic benches).

## Administrative Controls

These types of controls reduce risk through policies, procedures, and training. They rely on personnel management and compliance to be fully effective. Applied properly they can minimize coronavirus transmission. It is possible for COVID-19 to be spread by people who do not have any symptoms. When setting up controls, consider that everyone is potentially infected. Implementing and enforcing policies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in restaurants is critical to protecting employees and the public. Make sure to continue to review and update administrative controls as the pandemic evolves.

## Physical Distancing and Staff Related Changes

- Create and enforce a physical distance policy. Communicate these requirements to all employees and guests.
- Remind employees and guests to minimize non-essential in-person interactions with people from other households (to decrease potential COVID-19 exposures). Interactions should be kept brief and at the greatest distance possible (at least 2 metres).
- Wherever possible designate one-way routes through the restaurant.
- Limit the number of people allowed in washrooms at one time. Configure the space to have alternating sinks, stalls, and urinals out of service if they are within 2 metres of each other.
- Minimize contact for employees reporting to work by simplifying the process as much as possible (e.g., prevent crowds at punch clocks by being flexible with clock in/out times).
- Modify kitchen workstations to ensure the greatest possible distance between employees (at least 2 metres).
- Adjust daily employee levels to have the fewest people in the workplace (where safe to do so).
- Make sure essential roles such as supervisors, and first aid or emergency response team members are on each shift.
- Cross-train employees so they are safely able to replace the duties of others.
- Stagger shift starts and break times to minimize crowding at employee entrances, change and break rooms.
- Consider having groups of employees (cohorts) that work the same shifts. Keep groups separate as much as possible.



- Continue with safety and informational meetings but avoid gatherings of people where possible. Implement technology to conduct meetings virtually. If that option is not possible, gather in small physically distanced groups, preferably outdoors or in large well-ventilated locations.
- Reduce the number of shared objects. Assign cleaning supplies or radios to employees for their whole shift.
- Minimize close physical contact for all job tasks or modify them so they can be performed by one person (if safe to do so). If that is not possible, make sure all employees are [properly wearing a non-medical mask](#) when they are within 2 metres of each other and keep the interaction as short as possible.
- Plan for how employees and guests will maintain physical distance while during emergency evacuations.
- Prepare for exceptions to distancing guidance such as for anyone rescuing a distressed person, providing first aid, or performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Modify shared storage areas (e.g., winter footwear, sweaters, coats). Have employees store their personal items in separate lockers or in labeled, sealed bins/bags.
- Provide laundry service for work uniforms or require that employees wear freshly cleaned uniforms or clothes for each shift. Clothes should be bagged and washed after each shift.
- Implement flexible leave policies to accommodate employees who are at risk of more severe disease or outcomes (i.e., over 60 years old, immunocompromised, have chronic medical conditions).
- Adopt a modified sick leave policy and consider providing support to employees who are off sick, encouraging them to stay home when they feel ill, even if symptoms are mild.
- Do everything reasonably possible under the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your employees by providing information, training, cleaning, disinfecting, and personal protective equipment.

## Mask Wearing

Proper mask wearing helps to minimize the spread of COVID-19.

- Implement a mask wearing policy. Communicate these requirements to employees and guests. Make sure the policy complies with local public health authority recommendations.
- The policy should include when, where, and which type of mask is required to be worn.
- Require employees to properly wear well-constructed and well-fitting masks. Masks should cover the nose, mouth, and chin without gaps.
- Masks should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Inform employees of the limitations with masks. Include the fact that improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection.
- Consider using transparent masks, if appropriate, or use written directions to communicate with guests and co-workers who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Train staff and post signs reminding all people in the restaurant to:
  - Carry additional fresh masks
  - Change their mask if it becomes wet or soiled
  - Store soiled reusable masks in a clean container (launder masks before re-use)
  - Avoid touching the outside of the mask while wearing and removing it (touch straps only)
  - Wash (or sanitize) their hands with soap and water before and after putting it on or taking it off

## Employee Training

- Provide COVID-19 specific training to your employees, at minimum include the following:
  - [COVID-19 symptoms](#) and what to do if they start having symptoms
  - How to prevent the spread of COVID-19
  - How to protect themselves

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- Ways to stay informed (using reputable sources)
- Good [respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene](#)
- Changes to policies/procedures due to safety plan findings
- Teach employees to avoid unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives, as well as after-work gatherings.
- Discourage the sharing of personal items such as cellphones, lighters, etc.
- Have a violence and harassment policy to protect employees from frustrated guests. Train employees on your violence and harassment policy and procedures and include ways to diffuse difficult situations. For example, train conflict resolution techniques to front line employees that interact with guests who may react aggressively to COVID-19 public health measure or limited services.
- Instruct employees to avoid sharing equipment during their shift and on proper technique for cleaning and disinfecting equipment such as controls, screens, keyboards, tools, radios, personal devices (e.g., cellphones). Give them supplies and time to disinfect their workstation at the start and end of each shift.
- Train employees to wash or sanitize hands before and after touching shared items is unavoidable (e.g., checklists, clipboards, pens, tablets, trays, carts).

## Employee/Guest Screening and Contact Tracing

- Administer health screening questions to all employees and guests at entrances. Include current symptoms (if any), recent travel and potential COVID-19 exposures (templates are available from your local public health authority or [OHS organizations](#)). Consider having employees complete the screening using a company portal or app before coming into work.
- Employees that pass the screening can work. Employees who do not pass the screening should contact their supervisor. The supervisor should instruct them to stay (or return) home and monitor themselves for symptoms. Suggest that they contact their health care provider or local public health authority if they develop symptoms or symptoms worsen.
- Guests that pass the screening should be allowed to enter. Those that do not should be denied entry.
- Log all employee and guests who enter the workplace. This record is critical for contact tracing. If requested, provide the information only to local public health authorities. Make sure that privacy is protected, and that the information is stored and destroyed in a safe and secure manner, as required by privacy laws.

## Communication

- Managers should keep up to date and comply with orders from their local public health authorities or regulators.
- Communicate to employees and guests all new practices and policies that will affect their experience. Communicate these changes and post credible COVID-19 resources at entrances, washrooms, staff rooms, on websites, by email, or by phone.
- Keep posted information, guidance, and government orders up to date.
- Post signs throughout the dining room, bar, washrooms, and employee only areas about appropriate behaviours such as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and contactless payments.
- Indicate room occupancy limits at the entrances of kitchens, break rooms, washrooms, waiting areas, pick up windows, counters, offices, and event spaces.
- Communications should be written using easy to understand terms, in official and local languages.
- Use graphics and pictograms to clearly inform guests about desired and undesired conduct.

## COVID-19 Response Plan

- When a person reports having [COVID-19 symptoms](#), wear a mask (preferably a respirator or medical mask, if not available a well-constructed and well fitting non-medical mask).

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- If the person is in immediate distress, call 911 for medical assistance.
- Ask guests to leave the restaurant if it is safe for them to do so.
- For employees:
  - Have the person stop work, immediately. Isolate the person from others in a designated area or room. (**Note:** After the person leaves, clean and disinfect all surfaces and objects that the symptomatic person may have touched or been close to).
  - Send the employee home to begin their self-isolation. Ask them to avoid public transit, taxi, and ridesharing, if possible.
  - Instruct them to seek medical care, if necessary and to follow instructions from their local public health authority (check local public health websites).
  - Return to work should be determined by medical professionals or public health officials and will depend on the type, duration, and severity of symptoms and if taken, the result of a COVID-19 test.
- If an employee or guest informs you of a positive COVID-19 test result, report it to your local public health authority and cooperate with any contact tracing efforts. You may also be required to inform employees who might have been exposed unless that is the responsibility of your public health authority. Advise all those that were potentially exposed to carefully monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms.
- If the case is work-related involving a worker, additional notifications may be required, contact your **jurisdictional** [OHS regulator](#) and [workers' compensation board](#) for guidance. Complete an incident report and begin an investigation.

## Vaccines

- Encourage employees to get the COVID-19 vaccine once eligible and available in your jurisdiction.
- Share additional information on the vaccine by posting it on the safety board or sharing it electronically. Government of Canada website "[What you need to know about the COVID-19 vaccine for Canada](#)".

## Restaurant Specific Guidance

- Reduce noise levels as much as possible (e.g. turn off or lower the volume of background music) so people can speak as quietly as possible.
- Suspend live music and performances.
- Minimize unnecessary visitors to the facility. Conduct meetings virtually and reschedule non-critical maintenance and service calls, if possible.
- Encourage contactless payment methods. Clean payment pin pads and touch screens between uses.
- Consider designating one employee and one register to handle all cash transactions. That employee should be trained to wash or sanitize hands frequently and never touch their face with unwashed hands. Disinfect this equipment multiple times a shift.
- All other employees that handle cash should wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitize after every transaction.
- Arrange tables and chairs to maintain at least 2 metre distance between each dining party.
- Physically separate adjoining booths and similar seating arrangements:
  - Add physical barriers between them such as clear acrylic plastic or plexiglass.
  - Maintain empty booths between occupied booths.
- Replace traditional menus with, easy to disinfect, laminated menus or replace them with one-time use paper sheets. Alternatively, create online menus that are easily accessible by smart phone (e.g., QR codes).
- Consider creating or expanding outdoor dining areas, weather permitting.
- Configure order pick-up areas in such a way to provide the greatest possible distance possible (minimum 2 metres) between guests and employees. Use floor markings for clarity.

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- Provide an overflow waiting area outside (weather permitting), if possible.
- Modify payment pads to have long handles to help employees and guests maintain greater separation.
- Post signs with pick up instructions that guests must follow.
- Continue to follow all food safety requirements.
- Temporarily suspend self-serve options that require using shared utensils such as salad bars, breakfast bars, or buffets.
- Have cutlery, condiments, napkins, and other items behind a counter and available upon request instead of in communal dispensers.
- Segregate gathering and event participants from other guests of the restaurant.

## Cleaning and Disinfection

Follow safe practices for general [cleaning and disinfection](#) guidance.

- Restaurants operators should focus on kitchen equipment and tools, countertops, touch screens, waste and recycling bins, cash drawers and boxes, bill trays, payment pin pads and frequently used office equipment (pens, tools, phones, radios, keyboard, mouse, etc.). If in use, include high touch devices such as digital tablets, self-serve beverage stations and order kiosks.
- High transmission risk objects and surfaces should be disinfected multiple times a day.
- Ensure washrooms are cleaned frequently, have running water, and are stocked with soap, paper towels and a plastic lined no-touch waste container.
- Clean and disinfect tables, chairs, eating surfaces after each use.
- Make sure that the dishwashing equipment is operating within specifications, chose sanitizing cycles or setpoints, and use appropriate detergents and sanitizers.
- Avoid cross-contamination between clean and dirty dishware and glassware.

**If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).**



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

**Disclaimer:** As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.