# COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants and Food Service

***Updated March 13, 2020***

Federal, state and local health officials are working with communities across the region to protect people from the spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19.

Public health agencies advise business, health and social service agencies to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus, but everyone has a role in keeping our community healthy, and that includes our culinary talent at local restaurants and food carts.

## Best Practices for Customer Self Service and Dining Areas

- Eliminate self-service stations if possible or designate an employee to serve food. Examples include bakery cases, hot bars and salad bars.
- Ensure straws are wrapped and utensil handles are facing upward
- Provide alternatives for community dining, such as takeout and delivery service.
- Provide disinfectant wipes for customers to wipe down tables.

## Everyday disease prevention

Take simple steps to support a healthy work environment. These are important every day, but especially when preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 and flu.

- Post signs that encourage staying home when sick (link is external), covering coughs and sneezes (link is external), and washing hands frequently with warm soapy water (link is external) at workplace entrances, restrooms, employee break rooms and in other visible areas.
- Remind people to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Provide tissues, waste baskets and hand sanitizer in areas where employees gather or meet.
- Provide disposable wipes and other cleaning materials so that frequently touched surfaces (counters, doorknobs, toilets, phones, etc.) can be properly wiped down by employees before each use.
- Follow recommendations for cleaning and sanitizing your workspace.

## Stay home when sick

- Support employees staying home when they are sick.

- Ensure that your sick leave policy makes it easy for employees to stay home if they need to. Make sure you are in compliance with federal, state, and local sick leave laws and policies. Make sure employees know these policies and understand your expectations.
- Create or update flexible policies that allow employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or child who cannot go to school.
- Remind employees that anyone who becomes sick with a fever and cough at work should go home immediately. They should return only after they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines and/or cough suppressants.
- Make sure supervisors send employees home if they are sick.
- Plan for absenteeism by identifying essential functions and creating plans for continuity of operations.
  o Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so you can operate if key people are absent.
  o Consider what you need to maintain critical operations (identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, temporarily suspend some operations, if needed).

# Promote proper handwashing

- Make sure handwashing signs are put where employees can see them.
- Wash hands thoroughly (link is external) with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry hands with paper towels and throw the paper towels in the trash.

## Remember to wash hands:

- After coughing, sneezing, and wiping your nose.
- After using the bathroom.
- When preparing foods.
- When switching from preparing uncooked foods to working with ready to eat foods.
- After touching your face or hair.
- After touching animals.
- After eating and using tobacco/nicotine.
- After handling money or other forms of payment.
- After handling dirty equipment or utensils.
- Before putting on disposable gloves.
- Whenever hands become dirty.

# Use routine cleaning procedures

Early evidence suggests that the COVID-19 virus can survive for several days at room temperature. However, special processes beyond routine cleaning and sanitizing are not recommended at this time. Regular household cleaners as well as a simple bleach solution

(½ cup bleach to 1 gallon of water) have been shown to be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses.

## Cleaning and sanitizing

- Remember, cleaning and sanitizing are not the same. Clean with soap and water to remove dirt and food from surfaces. Sanitize with chemicals or heat to reduce germs. Surfaces that look clean may still have germs on them that you can't see. Sanitizing reduces these germs to safer levels.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that are frequently touched. Surfaces such as remote controls, kitchen counters, door knobs, bathroom surfaces, keyboards, tables and chairs, and phones and tablets should be cleaned often.
- Follow the instructions on your cleaner for how long the surface needs to remain wet for it to be effective.
- Food-contact surfaces should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized after each use.
- Use disposable gloves for cleaning and sanitizing. Throw them away before leaving the area and wash hands.
- If you use disinfectant wipes, use according to package directions. Do not reuse the wipes to wipe down multiple surfaces. Throw used wipes in the trash.

## Protect your customers

- Keep restrooms stocked with soap and towels or hand dryers.
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers to use, especially if there is no soap and water.
- Be sure to clean and sanitize any objects or surfaces customers may touch, including restroom surfaces, menus, condiments, etc.