COVID-19 Information Sheet for Food Service Providers in Health Care Settings
July 3, 2020

How is COVID-19 Spread?

- COVID-19 is transmitted via liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes.
- The virus in these droplets can enter through the eyes, nose or mouth if you are in close contact with the person who coughed or sneezed.
- The virus can also enter a person’s body from touching something with the virus on it and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose with unwashed hands.

How can you protect yourself and limit the spread of COVID-19?

General Precautions

Practice diligent hand hygiene at all times. Hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to protect yourself against all infections, including COVID-19.

Wash your hands often with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Antibacterial soap is not required for COVID-19. Alternatively, use alcohol-based hand rub with at least 70% alcohol content if your hands are not visibly soiled.

This includes, but is not limited to, washing your hands after handling waste, using the toilet, blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing, and before and after eating, drinking or smoking.

Maintain a safe distance of at least 2 metres (about 2 arms lengths) from clients and colleagues whenever possible, including during breaks and meals.

Practice cough etiquette. Cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue. Immediately dispose of used tissues in a waste bin and wash your hands right away.

Stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.

Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.

Do not share food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices, joints or bongs.
Personal Protective Equipment for Food Service Providers

- Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in accordance with your facility’s routine practices.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, all persons working in or visiting a Long-Term Care and Seniors Assisted Living facility should wear a surgical or procedure mask for the full duration of their shift or visit.
  - Surgical or procedure masks should be removed just prior to breaks or when leaving the facility.
  - Surgical or procedure masks should be changed if the masks become wet, damaged or visibly soiled.
  - Practice hand hygiene after removing the mask, and before putting on new mask.
  - If you see a colleague touch or adjust their mask, remind them to wash their hands.
  - Once removed, the mask should be disposed of. Do not put the mask back on.

Delivery and Pick Up

- Food services staff should not enter dedicated COVID-19 cohort units or rooms where patients diagnosed with COVID-19 or patients with COVID-19 symptoms have been admitted.¹
  - Food services staff should leave meal trays outside COVID-19 units or rooms and notify patient care staff.
  - Patient care staff will deliver meal trays to patients on droplet and contact precautions.
  - Patient care staff will return used trays to a cart outside of COVID-19 unit or room.
  - Food services staff should pick up used trays from outside COVID-19 unit or room.
- Hand hygiene is essential and must be performed:
  - Before preparing or handling food,
  - Prior to leaving and when returning to the kitchen,
  - Prior to starting meal delivery,
  - Prior to entering and exiting each unit,
  - Immediately after removing gloves (when gloves are used),
  - As needed before handling the next tray: after touching light switches, bedside curtains, door knobs.
- Use gloves in accordance with your facility’s routine practices when delivering or picking up food trays. If gloves are worn:
  - Staff must change gloves after carrying out non-food related activities, such as opening or closing doors by hand, and emptying bins.
  - Proper hand hygiene must be performed after removing gloves.

Dishwashing

- Routine precautions should be used when stripping dishes and working the dirty end of a dish machine. Routine precautions protect mucous membranes against exposure to infectious agents, including COVID-19. Routine precautions include:
  - Gloves
  - Apron
  - Goggles and mask, or
  - Face shield
Food Handling, Delivery and Pick-Up

No special precautions are required. The facility’s routine procedures are sufficient.³

- Use regular, reusable food trays, dishes and utensils for all patients. Disposable dishes are not required to stop COVID-19.
- Follow safe food practices, such as protecting foods from contamination, minimizing direct handling of food and preventing cross-contamination of foods.
- Discard any foods that may have been contaminated from coughs or sneezes.
- Do not bring food carts into patient rooms.
- Do not pick up trays that contain body fluids or sharps.
- Do not transport food on carts that have used dishes on them (i.e. carts used to deliver meals cannot be used to pick up used dishes at the same time).
- Regularly clean and disinfect carts used for transporting food between meal service and after picking up used dishes.
- Clean and disinfect cart handles before entering and after leaving patient care area, unit or floor.

Dishwashing

No special precautions are required. The facility’s routine procedures are sufficient.³

- Manage dishes and utensils in the same manner, regardless whether a patient is on routine or additional precautions.
- Use commercial dishwashers with hot water and commercial grade detergents to clean dishware.
- Commercial dish machine temperatures must be routinely checked and monitored in a log.
- Clean hands before handling clean dishes and utensils.
- Air dry dishes and utensils completely before sorting.
- Maintain separation between dirty and clean dishes in the dishwashing area at all times.
- Disposable dishes are not required, except in the circumstance of non-functioning dish machine.
- Clean and sanitize the entire dish room, including all dirty and clean dish buckets, at the end of the day.

Resources

- If you have questions about your health status, please contact your health care provider or HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1 for health advice on COVID-19 (translation services are available).
- BC’s COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool can help determine the need for further assessment: https://bc.thrive.health/
- For up-to-date information on COVID-19, please refer to the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) website: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19.

References