



BC Centre for Disease Control  
Provincial Health Services Authority

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## Food businesses

September 25, 2020

### Information for grocery stores, restaurants and other food premises for employers and workers.

The advice below is based on current recommendations and may change. Please reference materials and recent updates from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, Ministry of Health and BC Centre for Disease Control:

- **UPDATED.** **September 18:** updated [PHO order for Food Service Establishments and Liquor Services](#) and [Gathering and Events](#)
  - Liquor sales in all bars, pubs and restaurants for onsite consumption must cease at 10 p.m.
  - Unless a full meal service is provided, premises must close by 11:00 pm and all patrons must vacate the premises. If a full meal service is provided, premises may stay open, but liquor must not be served until 11:00 am the following day.
  - Music or other background sounds, such as from televisions, must be no louder than the volume of normal conversation.
  - If a food or liquor business holds an event, they should refer to the [order for Gatherings and Events](#).
  - All nightclubs must cease operating as nightclubs.
  - Events at stand alone banquet halls are prohibited.
- [Guidance to Food Processing Facilities \(May 29, 2020\)](#) - this guidance document interprets requirements for food processing facilities. [Checklist for inspection](#).
- TO BE UPDATED: [Guidance to Retail Food and Grocery Stores \(April 25, 2020\)](#) - this guidance document interprets the PHO orders for retail food and grocery stores.
- [WorkSafeBC COVID-19 and returning to safe operation - Phase 2 and 3](#). Operational guidance for worker and worksite safety. In addition all workplaces are required to have a [WorkSafe COVID-19 safety plan](#), post it on their web-site and make it available.
- [List of essential services](#) and [PHO orders](#)

Further information, details and answers to common questions with respect to guidance for Phase 3 of the COVID-19 pandemic can be found in the [PDF](#) of information on this page. This PDF will highlight changes in guidance practice as the COVID outbreak evolves.

## For businesses

**UPDATED.** Will appear before items that have been updated

### Spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

#### Reduce your risk of contracting COVID-19 with hand hygiene

- Ensure appropriate hand hygiene.
- Hand washing is essential to help you keep healthy, and reduces the risk of spreading microorganisms (germs) to others.
- You can pick up germs from the air when people who are sick cough or sneeze, or from surfaces where germs reside. If germs land on your hands and you touch your mouth, eyes, nose, these germs can enter your body and cause an infection.

- **For food service workers directly involved in food production**, we recommend appropriate hand washing with plain soap and water. Do not use alcohol based hand sanitizers.
- **For workers who are not involved in food production**, like cashiers and servers, we recommend appropriate hand washing with soap and water, hand sanitizer is also allowable.
- [Hand washing poster for your workplace](#)

**UPDATED.** Reduce your risk of contracting COVID-19 by wearing a non-medical mask or face covering.

Growing evidence supports masks being worn to control the spread of COVID-19.

At this time in BC, masks are not required to be worn at work, unless physical distancing is not possible.

Masks and face shields are recommended to be worn

- to provide protection to the wearer and to others
- to provide assurance to customers

Wearing a mask can help protect others by containing your own droplets from coughing, sneezing, speaking, or laughing. Masks also provide the wearer with some protection from others respiratory droplets. To be effective, masks (cloth or paper) should fit snugly and cover the nose and mouth. Face shields and half-mask shields that do not cover the nose and mouth snugly are not recommended for protection. Mask use by itself is not enough and should be combined with other preventative measures such as frequent [hand washing](#) and [physical distancing](#).

Masks are not effective when wet and should be properly laundered before use. Consult [BCCDC guidance](#) and WorkSafe guidance for further information.

[Selecting and using masks](#)   [How to use a mask](#)

### Should we be using disposable gloves?

Frequent and proper handwashing is always encouraged as it is the best way of preventing all respiratory virus infections and other foodborne illnesses. If a food premises chooses to use gloves, employees must wash their hands thoroughly before putting on the gloves and change them regularly. Change the gloves before you handle money or credit card machines, and afterward. Wearing gloves does not reduce the need for hand washing. Even while wearing gloves, employees must avoid touching the face.

### Can COVID-19 be transmitted through food imported from other countries?

Although COVID-19 can remain on surfaces for hours to days, it is very unlikely that the virus will survive after the length of time required for most shipping and distribution. There has been no evidence of COVID-19 being transmitted through food imported from any country, including those affected by COVID-19. To protect yourself from viral particles (fomites) that may be present on food packaging wash your hands after handling packaged goods.

### Does cooking kill COVID-19?

Cooking foods to an internal temperature of at least 74°C will inactivate COVID-19 and other bacteria in food. Always use a thermometer to check that the internal temperature of the food has reached 74°C. Following [time and temperature tables for inactivating Salmonella](#) in meat is also sufficient to inactivate COVID-19.

**Are foods prepared in grocery stores, such as rotisserie chickens, allowed?**

Foods that are prepared in retail stores that are individually packaged for customers are allowed. Cooking foods will inactivate COVID-19. These foods must only be handled by employees who are following established food handling procedures. Please see above for more information on cooking and food safety.

**Can COVID-19 be passed through handling money, credit cards or loyalty cards? Or through touching grocery carts or payment screens?**

COVID-19 is mainly spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on through touching or handling money, credit cards and handling of grocery cart handles. Although COVID-19 can remain on surfaces like paper money, plastic surfaces like credit cards and grocery store handles, it will eventually die off. Since it is possible the COVID-19 virus may remain on surfaces from hours to days, to limit spread through this route handwashing and enhanced cleaning practices are recommended.

**Hand washing:** Customers and employees are encouraged to use appropriate hand washing or sanitizers throughout the day, and always before eating, after using the washroom, when they arrive to work, when they arrive home and before they touch their eyes, nose, and mouth (see [Hand Hygiene](#) poster). In retail grocery stores and take-away premises, customers and employees will be touching many surfaces in the store that may also have been touched by others. The use of alcohol based hand rubs and alcohol based wipes in these environments will help to remove COVID-19 from frequently touched surfaces. Stores are also asked to post signs reminding customers to wash their hands and use hand sanitizer. Also,

- Employees who handle money must wash their hands with soap and water before preparing food.
- Dedicate employees (cashiers) to handle money and credit cards so they are segregated from preparing foods.
- Cashiers who handle money, including credit cards, must wash their hands frequently and be reminded to not touch their face.
- Gloves are an option to limit hand contact however they should be changed frequently.
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**Cleaning and disinfection:** Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces to at least twice daily or more if possible. This applies to any of these frequently touched items, including the following:

- Self-service scanning areas and payment touch screens.
- Handles of grocery store baskets and carts.
- Doors, railings, and common counter areas.
- **Point of sale devices.** Employees (cashiers) should limit direct handling of credit cards and loyalty cards where possible and allow customers to scan them. Where possible use point of sale (POS) devices that do not require customers to touch them. Frequently clean and disinfect POS devices.

**Sale of bulk items and customer self-service of food and beverage items**

For bulk items (e.g., muffins, baking supplies, or candy) that customers can dispense themselves, including self-service beverage stations (soda, coffee, slushies): while there is no documented spread of COVID-19 through food, there is a theoretical risk that a person infected with COVID-19 could spread the virus when touching shared equipment and utensils, for example, handles of coffee pots or bulk scoops.

Self-service stations may open following the guidance described below although we recommend self-service customer activities remain restricted as much as possible during resumption of business in Phase 2 and during Phase 3.

**Premises that choose to allow self-dispensed foods and non-alcoholic beverages must:**

- Provide hand washing or hand sanitizing near the station
- Post signs about hand hygiene and physical distancing measures
- Implement a frequent cleaning and sanitizing of the station and utensils used at the station and
- Take necessary steps to avoid congregation

**To limit customer hand-contact with foods that are served in bulk, we recommend that:**

- Staff continue to dispense bulk items from behind counters (e.g., fish counters, bakery counters).
- Customers have access to prepackaged servings of bulk foods (e.g., muffins or bulk raisins).
- Staff continue to pour soda, coffee and other beverages for customers. Consider switching or substituting pre-packaged (canned or bottled) beverages.
- Adequate tools are available to safely dispense bulk items (tongs, single use tissues, etc.)

**Bulk water in the community and in grocery stores****Bottled water dispensing sites in the community.**

At drive-up or stand-alone dispensing sites, self-service is allowed if the following are observed:

1. Where the site is unstaffed the operator of these water bottling sites must provide enhanced cleaning and sanitizing of high touch surfaces and dispensing equipment at least twice per day, with higher frequency desirable.
2. Physical barriers must allow only one customer at a time.
3. Signage must be available to describe requirements for physical distancing during water bottling and indicate that hygienic practices are required during dispensing of water at these sites. Users of these services should be reminded to practice hand washing before and after dispensing water.

**Bottled water dispensing sites in grocery stores.**

1. Staff must not fill a customer's returned container, customers should fill their own containers.
2. Signage must be available to describe requirements for physical distancing during water bottling and indicate that hygienic practices are required during dispensing of water at these sites.
3. Hand sanitizer and/or disinfectant wipes and a refuse container must be available for customers. Customers must be advised to use hand sanitizer and/or disinfectant wipes prior to dispensing water.
4. High touch surfaces on the water filling machine are disinfected as frequently as specified in the store's enhanced sanitation program.
5. If store management has written approval from the local EHO, bottle exteriors may be disinfected onsite prior to refilling for the same customer that brought them in.
6. Staff may take returnable water containers from customers. Staff must wash or sanitize their hands following receipt before engaging in other activities in the store.

## **Should customers bring their own containers for take-away food or bulk items? What about reusable grocery bags and reusable beverage cups?**

COVID-19 is mainly spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Although the COVID-19 virus may remain on surfaces from hours to days, this risk of spread is probably low. BCCDC and the health authorities respect the right of retail stores to make policy that works for them and their employees within the limits of the PHO Orders and normal operating requirements.

Requirements include:

- Premises must document store policy for accepting reusable containers such as grocery bags, coffee mugs, and customer owned food containers in the COVID-19 safety plan. Use the plan to inform customers of this policy.
- Increase the cleaning and sanitizing at high touch areas.
- Staff should wash their hands after handling reusable items received from customers

### **Reusable grocery bags**

- Employees (cashiers) packaging foods may choose not to handle customer reusable grocery bags. Stores may have a policy prohibiting use of reusable bags. BCCDC and the health authorities respect the right of retail stores to make policy that works for them and their employees.
- If reusable bags are accepted at a retail store, then customers may be asked to pack the bags themselves. If employees handle or pack groceries into reusable bags they are expected to practice frequent hand washing as described in this poster, [Hand hygiene](#). Employees are reminded that gloves are not a replacement for good and frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing.

### **Reusable beverage containers**

Self-service by a customer of a beverage into their own cup is different from handing a customers' cup to an employee to fill for them.

- When customers fill their own beverage cups, there is no risk to the employee. Customers should be only using reusable containers that have been properly cleaned and sanitized.
- Reusable beverage cups that employees handle on behalf of customers may be accepted, depending on store policy. Employees are advised to practice frequent hand washing after handling reusable beverage containers.

**In customer self-service areas:** Businesses are advised to implement a cleaning and sanitizing schedule for self-dispensing equipment particularly at high touch points.

### **Handling take-away containers**

COVID-19 is mainly spread person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Since it is possible the COVID-19 virus may remain on surfaces from hours to days, some spread through this route may also be occurring. Practicing good hygiene through regular hand washing and use of hand sanitizers will minimize the risk with handling or touching take-away containers.

Premises such as restaurants should provide single use containers for take-away foods. Premises that allow customers to pack their own leftovers into single use containers provided by the premises should consider physical distancing and hygienic measures to allow this activity to be safely conducted. Customers should not use their own containers for take-away food.

### **Should we accept bottles and cans for recycling?**

Yes, stores that sell beverages in a container that includes a deposit fee are required under the BC Recycling Regulation to collect and redeem those items. In areas where recycling is accepted for return, consider the steps that should be taken to avoid congregation. When collecting empty beverage containers staff and customers can protect themselves by:

- Practicing physical distancing during return of cans and bottles. Ask customers to place items for return down in a designated area, then step back 2 metres from that location. Mark the area where customers should wait while sorting and counting the items for return occur.
- Use barriers or wear masks in areas where physical distancing cannot occur
- Wash hands after handling recycled cans and bottles and after handling cash



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## Physical Distancing

**UPDATED.** **Physical distancing:** Implement physical distancing to reduce opportunities for interactions among patrons from different groups and/or staff who would have prolonged close contact. Physical distancing is established by providing a two metre distance between people or by providing a barrier that stops transmission of respiratory droplets from one person to another. [Poster](#)

### All stores and premises: safety during an emergency

Operators must develop and implement a COVID-19 contingency plan when store capacity is temporarily exceeded during an emergency, e.g. during a lightning storm or wildfire. When sudden inclement weather or an emergency situation affects the **safety** of patrons queued up outside the store, premises may allow patrons inside. The store should ensure that extra face masks and hand hygiene stations are available to address the temporary reduction in physical distancing during this period.

### At grocery stores

Retail grocery stores are advised to consult the Worksafe BC site for additional information [here](#).

Retail stores should:

- Limit the number of customers entering the store, calculate store occupancy and post these numbers.
- Advise customers in line to maintain physical distancing. When customers are waiting in line at the check-out they must stay 2 metres away from each other. In a practical sense, this would mean an equivalent of two arms length or one large shopping cart.
- Enhance your premise's sanitation plan and schedule, and ensure staff are practicing proper hygiene (e.g., frequent hand washing, as well as coughing or sneezing into your elbow rather than hands).

### Food sampling

Food sampling stations at grocery stores should not allow customers to congregate near the stations. We do not recommend stores allow sampling if they are not able to maintain physical distancing between customers in these areas.

- Grocery stores offering foods at sampling stations should have the area around the station marked to allow for a 2 metre separation between customers and from the sampling host.
- Signs and instructions can be used to inform customers to wait in line to get a sample and not crowd the sampling station.
- Sampling hosts should be protected from customers by means of a barrier, mask or some other method to maintain physical distance while offering samples to guests.
- Sampling stations need to be stocked with supplies to maintain sanitation and proper hand hygiene for the host.

### **UPDATED.** At restaurants and other premises

Restaurants and other premises (cafes, coffee shops, cafeterias, pubs, private clubs, pubs, bars, lounges and nightclubs, liquor tasting at distilleries or manufacturers) serving food and/or alcohol are advised to

consult the Worksafe BC site for additional information [here](#).

Nightclubs must cease operating as a nightclub.

According to the updated PHO order requirements for premises are shown below.

**NEW! Restaurants, pubs, and other premises serving alcohol:**

- must discontinue liquor sales at 10pm,
- must not allow liquor to be consumed on premises after 11pm,
- must close premises by 11pm with patrons leaving premises, unless the premises provides full service meals they may remain open (but liquor sales must not recur until 11am the following day)

**Restaurants and other premises must**

- determine the number of patrons and staff that can be inside and document this in your safety plan
- ensure patrons are separated by either a 2 metre distance or an appropriate barrier. [COVID-19 health and safety Designing effective barriers](#)
- monitor and control the number of people in the premises
- assess areas where crowding and congregation of patrons and staff may occur
- apply guidance and controls for physical distancing measures in these areas and monitor and control these areas
- ensure patrons remain seated during service, except to use self-serve food or non-alcoholic drink stations, to use the washroom or to leave the premises
- liquor may only be served to patrons who are seated (unless the premises manufactures liquor, patrons may go to the bar to get a drink, then seat themselves)
- Seating arrangements for tables, booths and at counters must allow for a two metre space between guests unless the guests are from the same party. Where a two metre space is not possible barriers may be installed instead (described below).
- Allow no more than 6 guests to be seated at one table, booth or counter even if they are from the same group.

**Premises with food buffets and non-alcoholic beverage self-service stations must**

- Provide hand washing or hand sanitizing near the station
- Post signs about hand hygiene and physical distancing measures
- Implement a frequent cleaning and sanitizing of the station and utensils used at the station, and
- Take necessary steps to avoid congregation

**Entertainment in restaurants and other premises**

Background music provided by a performer or a disc jockey is allowed under these conditions:

- Performers must be separated from patrons by a 3 metre distance or perform behind a barrier that protects patrons from respiratory droplets.
- Patrons must not sing, dance or perform Karaoke

In addition

- Dance floors must be closed
- Jam and open mic sessions are not allowed

**Additional requirements at restaurants to allow for contact tracing:** collect the name and phone number or email address of at least member of every party. Keep this information for 30 days.

**Exceptions noted in the order for cafeterias, private clubs (e.g. clubs that require memberships such as the Legion, golf, yacht, or other sporting club) or premises with a liquor manufacturing licence (e.g. a wine, beer or distilled tasting room) are excluded from**

- requirements to have patrons be seated, assigned to a table, booth or counter
- having dedicated staff to ensure patrons are seated, or congregating in licensed premises
- requirements to require patrons be seated when being served alcohol

**UPDATED.** Events at hotels, recreation centres, churches and other premises

**Events at stand alone banquet halls are prohibited.**

- For premises other than banquet halls, up to 50 patrons or fewer as described in the COVID safety plan may attend an event regardless of the capacity of the premises, if the event
  - has an organizer
  - has controlled access, does not allow patrons to congregate inside or outside the event, employs physical distancing measures to allow two metre separation and follows the requirements described for restaurants and entertainment (described on this page and in the order)
  - closes the premises after each event for at least one hour to allow the premises to be cleaned and sanitized once all patrons have left
  - does not allow patrons that leave an event to be replaced with other patrons

If the premises has separate areas within that premises or has separate buildings that meet these requirements

- have separate washrooms
- have separate entrances
- do not allow patrons from one event to congregate with patrons from another event in the premises

then those areas may operate as separate events or accept patrons.

**NEW!** Drive-in events

- must have an organizer who is responsible to
  - collect names, phone number or emails of patrons or vehicle drivers and retains this information for 30 days for contact tracing, and
  - monitors patrons to ensure they do not congregate outside of their vehicles
- may have up to 50 vehicles,
- patrons are informed they must stay in their vehicles except to use the washroom,
- no food or drink is served

### **Can I use a barrier to meet the physical distancing requirement? What are barrier requirements?**

Yes, suitable barriers may be used in areas where a 2 metre physical distancing cannot be used. Suitable should be rigid, impermeable, cleanable and be able to protect seated and standing persons from the transmission of droplets from other persons. More information about suitable barriers can be found in the WorkSafe document [COVID-19 health and safety Designing effective barriers](#).

Barriers may be used in place of 2 metre physical distancing and are also useful at check-outs and any areas where the spread of COVID-19 respiratory droplets may occur. Barriers should be in place between patrons unless they are in the same party.

### **Can we increase patron seating using outdoor spaces?**

Additional outdoor seating space may occur through expansion of the outdoor seating area but is subject to municipal by-laws. Outdoor space options include sidewalks, additional patios, green space and parking lot outdoor areas. Outdoor seating should not create situations where physical distancing cannot be practiced (example: tables impeding pedestrian traffic on sidewalks). Outdoor seating expansion must meet the same requirements as indoor seating that allow staff and patrons to physically distance 2 metres from each other.

### **How can kitchen workers apply physical distancing requirements in small kitchens?**

Physical distancing in busy work environments, such as kitchens may be difficult. The goal in the kitchen, as with any work-site environment, is to increase space between kitchen staff during meal preparations, and with customers during take-out and delivery services. Operators in food premises are asked to identify how this could best work in their kitchen by recording this is [their COVID-19 safety plan](#) (see WorkSafe BC [site](#)). Physical distancing [Poster](#)

Options that meet this requirement include:

- Staggering activities in time to limit the number of staff in a confined area during the same period.
- Moving activities to another room wherever possible. Separating duties into unused dining areas could be an option for some preparation and packaging.
- Altering shift times to minimize the number of staff working in close quarters
- Using markings or dividers in the kitchen to ensure physical distancing

### **How do I keep safe when making deliveries of groceries or other essential items?**

Volunteers and people engaged in food delivery activities must practice physical distancing and hand-washing. Contact clients before leaving the groceries or items at the door to confirm they are available to take receipt. When the item is left at the door, knock, ring or alert the client, then step back 2 metres. If required, establish a knock, drop, and go policy with the client. Alcohol hand rubs can be used to clean and disinfect hands after handling items and after touching door bells, etc.

### To reduce risk among customers

- If lining up is necessary, ensure that patrons maintain social distancing (require 2 metres space between patrons)
- Ensure service areas are properly cleaned and sanitized according to the product manufacturer's instructions after each customer service, staff shift changes, and before and after closing.
- Do not provide self-serve food to patrons; have your staff serve all foods and hand out tableware or utensils to customers.
- Have separate cleaning and sanitizing equipment for customer and kitchen areas.
- Have dedicated staff for cleaning and sanitizing the service area.
- Regularly clean and disinfect equipment for handling payments.
- Provide alcohol-based hand rubs in the food premise for patrons.
- Ensure washrooms are stocked with liquid soap and paper towels at all times, and that warm running water is available.
- Ensure that patrons maintain physical distancing while using or waiting for washrooms and do not congregate in these areas.
- Place hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette signs within areas in the food premise (for example, use this [Hand Hygiene](#) poster).
- Place signage on front doors that tell guests not to enter the premises if they are feeling ill. It is recommended that they use a self-assessment tool and follow the guidelines in the tool. <https://covid19.thrive.health/>
- Encourage your patrons to use delivery or take-out options to encourage customers to avoid lining up onsite or picking up meals in person.





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## Sanitation

### Should we review our sanitation program?

We recommend that food operators review their sanitation procedures and increase their sanitation frequency, especially for high touch surfaces and public areas.

Surfaces must be cleaned on a regular basis with an approved detergent. Cleaning removes the physical contaminants that are on a surface. This is followed by rinsing with clean, potable water. Cleaned surfaces must then be sanitized (food contact surfaces) or disinfected (non food contact surfaces). Review with your staff how to use and verify the concentration of sanitizers and disinfectants used in your food premises.

### Are sanitizers different from disinfectants?

Food grade sanitizers are used after cleaning to reduce the level of bacteria to a safe level when following the manufacturer's instruction for concentration and contact time. Sanitizers are used on food contact surfaces. When sanitizers are used at the no-rinse concentration level it does not need to be rinsed off with clean potable water.

Disinfectants are different from sanitizers in that they have a greater ability to destroy bacteria, viruses and molds. Disinfectants are used at a higher concentration and require a longer contact time than sanitizers. If a food grade disinfectant is used on a food contact surface, it may need to be rinsed off with potable water.

**Caution:** Operators must confirm with their chemical suppliers to ensure that sanitizers or disinfectants are appropriate for use against COVID-19, and for food premises use.

### What do I need to know about disinfectants?

In Canada, disinfectants must have a DIN (drug identification number). Some disinfectant/sanitizer products are the same chemical. It can be used as a disinfectant when used at a higher concentration and longer contact time or as a sanitizer when used at a lower concentration and shorter contact time. For example, "bleach" is considered a disinfectant when used at 1000 to 5000 ppm with a 10 minute contact time, but is considered a sanitizer when used at 100 to 200 ppm with a 2 minute contact time. To prepare a bleach solution consult the [FOODSAFE online bleach calculator](#).

**CAUTION: Always ensure that the disinfectant you use is approved for use in a food processing or food service application. Some disinfectants can be toxic and are unsuitable for food premises or food contact surfaces:**

[Canadian Drug and Health Products list of registered Sanitizers and Disinfectants.](#)

[Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 | US EPA \(List N\)](#)

[Infection Control information on BCCDC](#)

### How do I clean surfaces, linens, or clothing to reduce risk?

We recommend all food contact surfaces, such as food prep tables, kitchen, and packaging areas are cleaned and sanitized on a regular frequency. They do not need to be disinfected.

Customer service areas, dining rooms, or other areas in the restaurant or premises that are exposed frequently to the public should also be regularly cleaned and sanitized. The areas that do not have direct contact with food could also be disinfected. This is important for surfaces that are touched frequently, for example dining room tables, chairs, door knobs, or menus. It would be appropriate to disinfect any area that could be frequently touched or exposed to coughing or sneezing, for example hand-held POS (point of sale) devices or bathroom areas.

- For porous surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
  - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.
  - Otherwise, use products suitable for porous surfaces

### **Linens, clothing, and other items that go in the laundry**

- Do not shake dirty laundry to minimize dispersing soils and particles through the air.
- Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces.

### **Should we perform any special cleaning and what agents should be used?**

Maintaining a food safety program according to the Food Safety Act and Food Premises Regulation is vital to maintaining a hygienic and safe food business. COVID-19 is susceptible to sanitizers and disinfectants.

- Increase cleaning and disinfection frequency of high-touch surfaces and high traffic areas to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 (see above).
- Increase cleaning and sanitizing frequency of food contact surfaces.

### **Employee break areas**

COVID-19 is spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Recent information about the spread of COVID-19 among food handlers and crew members of cruise ships is consistent with employees acquiring COVID-19 through close contact in shared employee break areas and living areas.

To minimize the spread in common break areas requirements are that:

- Employees practice social distancing during break times. If possible, stagger the times employees take breaks in common areas.
- Perform more frequent cleaning and disinfecting of shared areas.



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## Managing ill employees

### Employer Information

- Employees that arrive at work or call in sick with respiratory symptoms must be told not to come to work and to practice self-isolation. Refer them to [Self-Isolation](#) guidance and symptom assessment guidance [BC COVID 19](#). Further information can be found on the [BCCDC website](#).
- If an employee has a COVID-19 positive diagnosis, the local public health department will identify any co-workers or clients who may have been exposed to the sick employee.
- The employer and employees should be reassured that if they haven't been contacted by public health then there is no issue or concern that was identified by public health.
- Your premises are not required to close following notification of an ill food worker. However, enhanced cleaning and sanitizing may be advised as described below.
- All food premises must have an updated employee illness policy that is communicated with all staff immediately.

### Enhanced cleaning

Your premises are likely already following an enhanced cleaning and disinfection regimen. Further cleaning and sanitation of food handling areas where the ill employee worked and cleaning and disinfection of high touch areas is highly recommended. These spaces include the following:

- Employee break areas
- Employee washrooms
- Employee change-rooms
- Door handles, light switches
- Equipment handled by the employee

Further information on cleaning in food businesses may be found under the sanitation section of this [Food businesses](#) page.

### Employee information

- Employees who start displaying symptoms should use the [BC COVID 19 self-assessment](#) tool. Employees must follow the operational policy for their workplace including advising the employer of illness.
- Employees that voluntarily self-isolate due to illness can return to work after 10 days when all symptoms have resolved. A residual cough may persist, but you can be cleared to return to work if all other symptoms have resolved.
- Employees with a positive diagnosis for COVID-19 will be contacted and followed-up by public health.

### Should my employees get tested for COVID-19?

People who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 do not need to be tested. Symptoms of COVID-19 include coughing, sneezing, sore throat, fever, and difficulty breathing. If an employee has been exposed to COVID-19 but is currently asymptomatic (not showing any signs of illness), they do not need to be tested.

**NEW! If my employee has a cold or seasonal flu-like illness when can they return to work?**

Employees should consult their health care providers. It is recommended they receive a COVID-19 test. If the test is negative and symptoms are resolved they may return to work immediately.

**NEW! If my employee is asymptomatic and their COVID test is negative can they return to work?**

If an employee has been asked to quarantine by a health care provider they must not return to work for the prescribed period even if their COVID test is negative and they have not symptoms.

**NEW! Can I ask my employees about their COVID test result?**

No, employees are not expected to disclose the results of their COVID or any other medical tests to their employer. This protects an individual's rights to privacy. Employees do have an obligation to report communicable diseases and must not attend work if they are ill. They may choose to voluntarily disclose an illness in confidence to their employer but are not required to do this.

**Should my employee work after returning from holiday outside of Canada?**

As of March 12, anyone returning from international travel must self-isolate for 14 days (2 weeks) before returning to work. They do not need to be tested for COVID-19 before returning to work.

Encourage employees to self-monitor for symptoms of respiratory illness including a cough, sneeze, fever, sore throat or difficulty breathing. Tell your employees that if they are sick they must remain at home. Advise them to use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool to know when to seek healthcare. [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#).

## Other resources

- [Farmers markets](#)
- [Food banks](#)
- [Food safety for the public](#)

## Related links

- [Farmers' markets](#)
- [Food banks](#)
- [Food safety](#)
- [FOODSAFE Bleach Calculator](#)
- [FAQ for Food Industry \(Cornell University\)](#)
- [WorkSafeBC Resources COVID-19 support to workers and employers](#)
- [World Health Organization food safety for food businesses COVID-19 and Food Safety: Guidance for Food Businesses](#)

**List of updates (2020):**

Sep 25: updated PHO order (Sep 18): liquor services ends at 10pm, premises close at 11pm. Night clubs and stand alone banquet halls cease operations. Updated and edited masks, money and credit cards, bulk and customer self-service, added drive-in events, removed details around numbers of events, new employee illness info.

Aug 4: updated PHO order (Jul 31); physical distancing in restaurants and other premises including exemptions for cafeterias, private clubs and tasting rooms; entertainment; events

Jul 31: updated PHO order (Jul 23); food imports & packaging; bulk items (store policy); take-away containers; accepting cans for recycling; food sampling; physical distancing & entertainment in restaurants; contact tracing.

Jun 24: New order; Barriers

Jun 11: Bulk items; Customer self-service; Customer reusable beverage containers; Restaurant physical distancing; barriers; outdoor patio areas; Use of masks

May 29: Addition of WorkSafe links, removed restaurant restrictions

May 8: Update plan announcement

Apr 29: Bottled water

Apr 27: COVID-19 Guidance to Retail and Grocery Stores (link to Ministry of Health document)

Apr 15: Bottled water; managing ill employees; list of links

Mar 30: Credit cards; Bulk items; Reusable bags and containers

Mar 27: PDF introduced