Food businesses

Jump to Error! Reference source not found. for additional information currently not listed on the food business page

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

UPDATED. Will appear before items that have been updated

Prevention measures for all food businesses
All food businesses are required to follow:
PHO order for Workplace Safety – updated June 14, 2021
Ministerial Order for wearing face coverings in indoor public areas - November 24, 2020
Employers must review their COVID-19 safety plan is consistent with WorkSafe BC guidelines.

Daily worker health checks
- Daily health checks of employees must be performed, employees must not work if they did not pass or properly perform the daily health check.
- Employers must encourage workers to work from home if that is possible, and provide supports for this.
- Provide messaging to customers to not shop or dine and stay home if sick (cold, flu, COVID-19 symptoms).
- Support your employees to stay home if they are sick.

Physical Distancing
- Ensure customers can maintain physical distancing of 2 metres space in line ups, including while waiting for washrooms.
- Determine the maximum number of customers who can be accommodated in your premises and document this in your COVID-19 safety plan.
- Monitor and control the number of people in the premises.
- Prevent customers and employees from congregating at the workplace. Implement employee and customer health screening. Anyone who is ill should go home and not enter the store, restaurant, pub, café or premises.

UPDATED. Cleaning

All food premises and businesses are required to have a Sanitation Plan under section 24 of the Food Premises Regulation. Routine cleaning and normal sanitation practices should be implemented.

Document and follow cleaning practices that will reduce risks of communicable disease and food-borne illness. This may include more frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces, such as POS systems, bulk bin handles, garbage can lids, elevator buttons, high touch surfaces on bottled water filling machine, etc..

All operators are expected to update and maintain their sanitation plans.
For further information about surface (fomite) transmission risk, please see this evidence review from NCCEH: [Fomites and the COVID-19 pandemic: An evidence review on its role in viral transmission](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)

### Hand hygiene
- Employees should practice good hand hygiene including frequent hand washing, as well as coughing or sneezing into your elbow rather than hands.
- 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.

### Masks
- Masks must be worn by both customers in restaurants, cafes, pubs, bars or other businesses where food is sold except while eating or drinking or sitting at a table.
- Exemptions apply for children under 12 years of age, people cannot put on or remove a mask on their own, those with health conditions including psychological and behavioural conditions that prevent them from wearing a mask, and for those who have to remove a mask to communicate.
- An employer’s COVID-19 Safety Plan may require workers to wear a mask when interacting directly with customers. However, workplaces may have other control measures in place such as a well-designed plexiglass shield that acts as a barrier between customers and employees. More information about suitable barriers can be found in the WorkSafe document COVID-19 health and safety: Designing effective barriers.

### Signage
- Place hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette signs within areas in the food premise (for example, use this [Hand Hygiene poster](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)).
- Place signage on front doors that tell customers not to enter the premises if they are feeling ill. [Poster](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- Place signage at entrances requiring customers to wear masks.
- Place signage in employee areas about COVID measures in place. [Poster](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)

### Self-service, reusable containers and grocery bags, bulk bins and other items...
COVID-19 transmission from handling reusable containers such as grocery bags, coffee mugs, dollar bills, coins, bulk bins and other reusable items HAS NOT BEEN DOCUMENTED. There are transmissions linked to touching shared surfaces, such as elevator buttons or lids of garbage cans. Because the risk is LOW, premises may go back to normal activities as long as COVID safety measures known to reduce overall risk are maintained.

Permitted activities include:
- accept and fill reusable coffee mugs and water bottles,
- allow reusable containers for take-away per provincial policy (link to posting) (must be described in food premises food safety or sanitation plan)
- allow reusable grocery bags,
- pack grocery bags for customers requiring assistance,
- allow customer self-serve of bakery items, beverages, utensils and other items,
• accept cash in the form of bills and coins, and
• accept returnable cans and bottles for deposit

COVID-19 safety measures that need to be in place include:
• cleaning and disinfection of highly touched surfaces,
• frequent hand-washing,
• providing hand hygiene for customers,
• maintain physical distancing of 2 metres or use of barriers, and
• wearing masks.

These measures should be documented in the COVID-19 safety plan.

For further information about surface (fomite) transmission risk, please see this evidence review from NCCEH: Fomites and the COVID-19 pandemic: An evidence review on its role in viral transmission

Grocery stores
Retail grocery stores should consult the Worksafe BC protocols for retail operation and follow the PHO orders for retail businesses under section M of the Gathering and Events order.

• Follow physical distancing requirements as described below on this page that limit capacity (five square metres of space for patrons and staff); document this number in the COVID-19 safety plan and ensure these numbers are not exceeded,
• In premises with less than five square meters of space, a maximum of one patron may enter and this number must be documented in the COVID-19 safety plan,
• Persons that cannot be safely accommodated, if advised by the owner or staff, must not enter and should leave if requested,
• Where practical provide signs and barriers to allow two metre distance between customers and to avoid congregation of patrons,
• Provide hand sanitation.

Food sampling stations: avoid congregation
• Food sampling is not recommended if customers are not able to maintain physical distancing.
• Do not allow customers to congregate near food sampling stations. Mark the area around the station to allow for a 2 metre separation between customers and from the sampling host.
• Use signs and instructions 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.

Bottle and can recycling programs
UPDATED. COVID-19 transmission from handling beverage containers is LOW risk, premises may go back to normal activities as long as COVID safety measures known to reduce overall risk are maintained:
• 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.

**Restaurants and food-serving 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.

NEW! [Poster for restaurant workers](#) (Click image to enlarge)

![Requirements in Food Premises](#)

This poster is also available in these languages:
- French
- Korean
- Japanese
- Vietnamese
- Hindi
- Punjabi
- Farsi
- Traditional Chinese
- Simple Chinese
- Tagalog
- Thai

• Restaurants, pubs, and other premises serving alcohol must follow [PHO Orders on liquor sales and hours](#) (described below).
• For outdoor patio seating, follow the [Guidance for Outside Dining Spaces](#).
• Ensure customers are separated by either a 2 metre distance or an appropriate barrier, see below reference to physical barriers).
• Assess areas where crowding and congregation of customers and employees may occur and apply guidance and controls for physical distancing measures in these areas and monitor and control these areas.
• Have separate cleaning and sanitizing equipment for customer and kitchen areas.

**Seating**

• Ensure customers 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 customers who are seated (unless the premises manufactures liquor, customers 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 customers unless the customers 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 customers to be seated at one table, booth or counter even if they are from the same group. During table service do not ask customers to serve themselves from

Information on the BCCDC COVID-19 Food Businesses Page

communal containers (e.g. large bowls of soup); have employees serve all foods and hand out tableware or utensils to customers.

The following types of food premises are exempted from the requirements shown below: 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).

- Customers can seat themselves without an employee showing them to a table (i.e. exempted from the requirements to have customers be seated, assigned to a table, booth or counter)
- Customers must avoid congregation (i.e. premises are exempted from having dedicated employees to ensure customers are seated, or congregating in licensed premises)
- Bar counter and standing service (i.e. exempted from requirements to require customers be seated when being served alcohol).

Food premises with 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.

**UPDATED. Banquet Hall requirements**

June 17th: Indoor banquet hall events including food services may occur according to Part C of the Gathering and Events Order with these measures in place:

- Documented COVID-19 prevention measures in the COVID-19 safety plan
- There must be an organizer
- Measures in place to prevent congregation outside and inside the hall
- Maximum of 50 persons per event, not including staff
- Maximum of 6 people per table, 2 metre separation unless they reside together, -Participants must remain seated unless they are being served at a serving counter, picking up a meal in a take-away container or snack or non-alcoholic drink, or to use the washroom
- 2 metre separation between tables or use of barriers
- 3 metre separation or barrier for presenters, musicians, speakers
- Organizers must keep a record of participants that includes first and last name, phone or e-mail contacts. Information must be stored for 30 days, then destroyed
- Clean, sanitize and ventilate between events
- Liquor and meal services:
- No self-serve liquor, participants must remain seated when being served liquor,
- Liquor sales and service end at midnight, no consumption after 1 a.m.
- Meals must be
  - served to seated participants, or
  - participants may pick up a plated meal from a counter prepared by staff, or
  - prepackaged meals may be served to seated participants, or
  - prepackaged meals may be picked up by participants
- One table at a time of 6 participants may leave to pick up a prepared meal, or be served from a serving counter

Other requirements at events

- No singing, dancing, karaoke. Dance floors must be closed.
• Participants leaving one event should not be interacting with participants arriving for another event. For full details see the Gathering and Events Order.

**Liquor sales and hours**
• Liquor can be served until midnight, no person may consume after 1 a.m.
• Liquor may not be served until 9 a.m. the following day.

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

**Use of physical barriers**
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 customers unless they are in the same party.

**Outdoor seating**
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.

Please refer to the Guidance for Outside Dining Spaces. It is recommended that patios continue to allow for optimal ventilation for patrons. Examples on how to achieve this are shown in the guidance.

**Physical distancing in 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 in their COVID-19 safety plan.

Suggested activities 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
- Posting physical distancing reminder posters.

**Food Service delivery**
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.

**Community bulk water sites**
Bottled water dispensing sites in the community
At drive-up or stand-alone dispensing sites, self-service is allowed if the following are observed:
- **UPDATED.** Routine cleaning occurs according to the sanitation plan,
- Physical barriers must allow only one customer at a time,
- 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.

**Links to guidance for food businesses**
- [Tools and strategies for safer operations during the COVID-19 pandemic](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [NCCEH COVID-19 Pandemic Resources for Environmental Health](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
  - Restaurants, pubs and cafes (July 9, 2020), 2-pager (June, 2020)
  - [Guidance for Food Service establishments](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses) (Vancouver Coastal)
- All workplaces are required to have a [WorkSafe COVID-19 safety plan](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [List of essential services](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses) and [PHO orders](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)

**Related information**
- [Farmers markets](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [Food banks](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [Food safety for the public](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [FOODSAFE Bleach Calculator](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [FAQ for Food Industry](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses) (Cornell University)
- [WorkSafeBC Resources](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses) COVID-19 support to workers and employers
List of updates (2020/2021):
Jun 23, 2021: Cleaning back to normal (info deleted), returning containers is low risk, removed retail store in-store bottled water requirements, updated community bottled water (normal cleaning), added info about banquets
Jun 15, 2021: Liquor service hours updated. Requirement to collect patron names and phone numbers and store for 30 days removed.
Jun 11, 2021: bulk bins, reusable grocery bags, cups, containers may now be used. COVID-19 safety measures still in place (physical distancing, masking, cleaning of high touch surfaces).
May 26, 2021: patio guidance recommended (not required), all translated posters available
May 13, 2021: patio guidance, update on translated food premises posters
Mar 10, 2021: masking info for restaurants updated, update on translated food premises posters
Feb 1, 2021: entire page reorganized and updated.
Dec 18, 2020: new PHO order (Dec 16) workplace safety; masking requirements; Gathering and Events updates.
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