Food businesses

July 2, 2021

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

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

**UPDATED.** Prevention measures for all food businesses

Employers should be transitioning from COVID-19 Safety Plans to Communicable Disease Plans. Communicable disease plans should address worker illness policy, hand hygiene, vaccine promotion and other elements. [Review WorkSafe BC guidance](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses).

Employers are asked to keep some measures in place, such as masking and physical distancing as long as it does not interfere or negatively impact operations. More information can be found on the [Employers and Business](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses) page.

Orders that may apply to food businesses include:

- [Food and Liquor Serving Premises](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [Gathering and Events](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)

**Cleaning**

All food premises and businesses are required to have a Sanitation Plan under section 24 of the [Food Premises Regulation](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses). 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.
- Provision of alcohol-based hand rubs in food premises for patrons is recommended.
- Ensure washrooms are stocked with liquid soap and paper towels at all times, and that warm running water is available.

**Masks**

- Masks may be worn voluntarily in the workplace by workers and by customers.
- Masks are recommended for indoor public spaces for individuals over 12 years of age who are not fully immunized.
  - It takes two weeks after the second dose to become fully immunized.
• Masks are optional for children aged 2-12 and children under 2 should not wear masks.
• Full vaccination occurs 14 days after a second dose of COVID-19 vaccine.
• Operators who wish masks to be worn on their premises should advise customers upon entry and may choose to provide masks to them.

**UPDATED** Self-service food or beverage stations in food premises and food or drink stations at events must...
• Provide hand washing or hand sanitizing near the station
• Post signs about hand hygiene and physical distancing measures, and
• Implement a frequent cleaning and sanitizing of the station and utensils used at the station.

Other self-service activities, 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,
• accept returnable cans and bottles for deposit, and
• put menus, salt and pepper shakers, ketchup bottles etc. back onto the table, and ensure cleaning occurs regularly.

Practices recommended include:
• cleaning and disinfection of highly touched surfaces per the sanitation plan,
• frequent hand-washing,
• voluntarily wearing masks
• providing hand hygiene for customers,
• maintain physical distancing of 2 metres or use of barriers, and
• improving ventilation for customers and workers.
These measures should be documented in the sanitation and communicable disease 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)
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 open with some restrictions.

Reminder: Operators are advised to keep some safety measures in place if they do not interfere with operations. For example, staff who have not been fully immunized are advised to continue wearing masks for their protection; and the use of barriers in restaurants and food premises between customers or customers and staff is also advised.

**UPDATED. Seating and number of patrons**

- Calculate the number of patrons that can be on the premises, document this number, and ensure this number is not exceeded. We recommend to calculate space available based on 5 metre squared per person.
- Prevent congregation inside and outside the premises.
- Ensure there is seating for customers, and that customers remain seated during service.
- Customers must remain seated, except to use
  - a self-serve food or drink station,
  - to use the washroom,
  - to provide assistance,
  - to leave or return to the premises,
  - to use a pay-station, lottery dispenser or juke-box,
  - or, with other members of the party, to play pool, snooker, darts or bowl.
- In liquor licensed premises, customers must be shown to their seats and remain seated. This does not apply to cafeterias, private clubs or tasting rooms.

**UPDATED. Inside events serving food or liquor, such as banquet halls**

In addition to the requirements for all businesses described above, indoor events at banquet halls and other premises that include food services may occur according to Part C of the Gathering and Events Order with these measures in place:

- Documented communicable disease plan, food safety plan and sanitation plan
- There must be an organizer, access to event is controlled, and the organizer must monitor the number of guests ensuring numbers do not exceed capacity.
- There must be seating for each participant.
- Maximum of 50 people, not including staff, or up to 50% of the venue capacity for indoor events. Use all available space, and we recommend to calculate space available based on 5 metre squared per person.
- Participants must stay in their assigned seat and remain seated unless they are
  - Using a self-serve station
  - Using the washroom
  - Assisting with care or first aid for another person
  - Leaving or returning to the place
- Sufficient staff must be available to ensure participants remain seated and do not congregate
- Hand sanitation supplies are available, and toilet facilities include water, soap and paper towels
- Participants may not dance, and dance floors must be closed, unless they are used for a performance.
- Participants must follow guidance of organizers and staff
Further recommendations not specified in the Orders include:

- Maintain a 2 metre separation between tables or use barriers.
- Clean, sanitize and ventilate between events.

For full details see the Gathering and Events Order.

**Entertainment in restaurants and other premises**

Performers:

- Physical distancing is recommended, otherwise restrictions on performances are removed.

Patrons:

- Patrons must remain seated,
- Socializing between tables is not permitted, and
- Dancing is not permitted.

**Use of physical barriers**

Suitable barriers may be used in areas where a 2 metre physical distancing cannot be used. Suitable barriers 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](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses).

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.

**UPDATED.** Related information and guidance

- [PHO orders: Food and Liquor Serving Premises](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- Gathering and Events
- [WorkSafe BC guidance](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [COVID-19 in indoor environments — air and surface disinfection measures](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [Role of ventilation in influencing COVID-19 transmission risk](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses)
- [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)

**List of updates (2020/2021):**

Jul 2, 2021: reinstated self-serve station requirements, updated seating and number of patrons, indoor event requirements, guidance and links.

Jul 1, 2021: Step 3 of BC Restart Plan. Removed Orders, daily health checks, physical distancing, all items for grocery stores, sampling stations, bottle and can recycling programs, restaurant posters, indoor seating, outdoor seating, physical distancing in kitchens, food service delivery, liquor sales hours, community bulk water sites, and links to food guidance. Updated masking, self-service items, banquet halls, entertainment.

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.

Information on the BCCDC COVID-19 Food Businesses Page

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
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