

COVID-19 Guidelines

For the reopening of Food Establishments

6/5/2020

Department of Environmental Health

INTRODUCTION

Food safety has always been a priority for the food industry, for both customers and employees. The purpose of this guidance is to build on established good food safety practices and to offer practical guidance for food business owners to implement measures which can reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), currently there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 through consumption of food.

Existing food safety requirements are already stringent and reduce the likelihood of foodborne disease transmission. However, additional measures can be taken to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 from touching surfaces or from person-to-person spread through respiratory droplets.

Operators should make use of these guidelines as they relate to their existing policies and procedures and in conjunction with instructions they receive during their reopening phase-in.

Employers should also consider developing a team within their business to monitor, assess, and implement the strategies and control measures to control the risk of COVID-19 spread.

Employers should consider the following guidelines for reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission, specifically with regard to:

- **EMPLOYEE HEALTH**, including employee checks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), personal hygiene, communication to staff and advice for customers;

- **CLEANING AND DISINFECTION** including food preparation areas and contact surfaces, waste and laundering, restrooms, ventilations;
- **PHYSICAL DISTANCING;**
- **ORDERING, PICK-UP & DELIVERY.**

Due to the wide variety of restaurants, functions, and sizes, it may not be possible for establishments to implement all of the following, however, trying to tackle the problem from multiple angles can help reduce health risks.

Employers should also ensure all employees are adequately trained on all aspects of the precautions you are taking to avoid the risks of spread of COVID-19 to both employees and customers.

EMPLOYEES' HEALTH

It is essential that food business owners consider both the health of their employees and their customers before opening their business or expanding the range of services they provide.

Inform employees of the symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, persistent, persistent cough, breathing difficulties) and instruct employees with symptoms associated with COVID-19 to report them to their supervisors.

Instruct sick employees to stay home and to follow the advice of the Public Health Department.

If an employee is sick at work, send them home immediately.

The employee must be instructed to seek medical help immediately via their GP or the 24-hour **Flu Hotline** on 1-800-534-8600 or 925-6327 (Flow) or 947-3077 (Digicel), or email flu@hsa.ky.

Clean and disinfect surfaces in their workspace and others they may have come into contact with.

Others at the facility with close contact (i.e. within 6 feet) of the employee during this time should be considered exposed.

Instruct employees who are well, but know they have been exposed to COVID-19, to notify their supervisor and follow Public Health Department guidance.

Inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, if an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, while maintaining confidentiality.

If an employee is sick or receives any kind of testing (virus or antibody), results should be reported to employer, and timing/decision to go back to work should only be with doctor's approval.

Undertake wellness checks of employees before each shift and consider temperature screening.

Temperature screening can include manual (use non-contact infrared thermometers) or thermal camera methods. Employees can self-check temperature while wearing gloves or disinfecting between uses. Any operator who chooses to do temperature screening should first engage health officials and adopt policies aligned with proper procedures. Current guidance states the minimum temperature that indicates a fever is 100.4°F.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Face coverings have been shown to be effective tools to mitigate risk from individuals who show symptoms as well as those who don't, especially in enclosed environments where it's hard for people to maintain a three- to six-foot distance. Ensure you follow current Government Guidance with regard the use of face masks.

Single use face masks should be disposed in accordance with good hygienic practice. Cloth or reusable masks must be cleaned/laundered daily or in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Emphasize effective hand hygiene including washing hands for at least 20 seconds. Always wash hands with soap and water. This includes:

- When you arrive at work
- Before handling and preparing food
- Before and after dealing with each customer,
- After touching your mask
- After visiting the restroom
- Before eating

- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After taking a break
- When you leave work.

If soap and water are not readily available, then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash hands after.

Provide hand-washing stations at the front of the establishment and throughout the establishment for customers to wash hands before being seated or when needed, or alternatively, hand sanitizer if not feasible.

Provide hand sanitizer at each table.

In the kitchen and other food preparation areas consider the use of gloves to avoid direct bare hand contact with ready-to-eat foods. Gloves must be discarded on a regular basis and in accordance with good food handling principles.

Consider providing gloves to servers. If they are worn, they must be changed regularly and are not a substitution for hand-washing.

Where possible, workstations should be staggered so employees avoid standing directly opposite one another or next to each other. Where six feet of separation is not possible, consider other options (e.g., face coverings) and increase the frequency of surface cleaning and sanitising.

COMMUNICATION

Communicate to the customers what the food business is doing to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., disinfection routine, health policies for staff, and health & safety measures in place). Consider communicating to diners when dining out may not be a good option (e.g. taking care of someone who is COVID-19 positive, exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, being in a high-risk category, etc.).

Consider placing signage on tables to show that they have been disinfected after previous customers.

Post signage at the entrance which states that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 is to be permitted in the restaurant. Communicate that the restaurant has the right to refuse service to anyone not following guidelines (e.g. physical distancing).

Information can be communicated by websites, reservation processes, hand-outs, and outdoor signage.

Limit the number of employees allowed simultaneously in break rooms. With larger staffs, use communication boards to or digital messaging to convey pre-shift meeting information.

ADVICE FOR CUSTOMERS

What can a Customer can do to minimize the transmission of Covid-19?

- If you are sick stay home. If you have a temperature stay home. If someone in your house is sick, stay home. If you have allergies and can't control sneezing, stay home.
- Use take-out/pick-up services where you can.
- Wear a mask as you enter and leave the building.
- Wash your hands before and after you leave the building if possible. If not, use hand sanitizer when you sit down and before you leave the building.

- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet from other customers and employees when waiting for a table and when walking throughout the restaurant to the extent possible.
- If you get the urge to sneeze or cough, put on your mask, cover your nose, mouth, and mask with a napkin or handkerchief, attempt to delay the urge to sneeze or cough, immediately leave the building, wash your hands and face thoroughly before seating back down.

FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

Cleaning and disinfection is an essential part of good hygiene practice and can greatly reduce the risk of contamination of surfaces and equipment.

BEFORE RE-OPENING

Thoroughly detail-clean and disinfect the entire facility. Focus on high-contact areas that would be touched by both employees and guests. Do not overlook seldom-touched surfaces. Follow disinfection material guidance and ensure all disinfectants are at an effective disinfection strength.

Select appropriate disinfectants that meet health requirements for use against SARS-CoV-2. Review product labels and Safety Data Sheets for application and contact time and other safety considerations. Contact your chemical supplier, where necessary, for further information on the chemicals you use. Ensure the chemicals used for disinfection are adequate to remove SARS-CoV-2 and food borne pathogens.

Consider using a checklist or audit system to track how often cleaning is conducted.

AFTER OPENING

Make hand sanitizer readily available to guests and encourage them to use it. Consider touchless hand sanitizing solutions.

Consider establishing a single staff position whose responsibility is to disinfect. This person should be continuously cleaning and visible to customers.

Between seatings, clean and disinfect the table and chairs where possible. Consider covering chairs in a non-porous material for easy cleaning.

Remove all condiments from the table (e.g., ketchup bottles, salt and pepper shakers, etc.) and consider providing pre-packaged items, or single servings. Clean and disinfect any items customers may have touched such as condiments and check presenters. Single-use items should be discarded.

Consider using rolled silverware and eliminating table presets. Remove all unwrapped items from self-service stations.

Clean and disinfect reusable menus. Menus should be non-porous and easy to clean. Consider alternatives like a menu board or phone app. If you use paper menus, discard them after each customer use.

Cover any exposed clean silverware, dishes, glasses, pots and pans. Relocate hanging bar glasses to a covered area.

Provide silverware wrapped or covered at the table, along with glasses turned upside down on a clean napkin.

Use disposable napkins and tablecloths wherever possible. Only use cloth tablecloths if they are changed for each customer and properly laundered after each use. Apron, towels, work clothing, etc. should be placed in trash bags and treated as potentially contaminated and laundered

Any items left by customers should be placed in sealed bags and the bag should be disinfected and isolated until customer returns.

FOOD PREPARATION AREAS AND SERVICE AREAS

Ensure food preparation areas and service areas are cleaned in accordance with good food safety practice.

Wash, rinse, and disinfect food-contact surfaces including food equipment, dishware, utensils, food preparation surfaces, and beverage equipment after use.

Frequently disinfect surfaces repeatedly touched by employees or customers such as door handles and hand-push plates, equipment handles e.g., fridge/freezer handles, registers, menus, phones, etc.

Frequently clean and disinfect floors, counters, and other common areas.

Discontinue the use of self-serve and buffet style food areas such as brunch events, hot bars, salad bars and hot cabinets where customers use tongs and other equipment. Where necessary, these should be replaced by staff serving the food items and protected by screens.

WASTE AND LAUNDERING

Single-use items and used disinfection materials can be treated as regular waste, following food safety guidelines.

Cloth materials (e.g., linens, aprons, etc.) should be washed and dried on the highest temperature setting allowable for the fabric.

RESTROOMS

Doors to multi-stall restrooms should be able to be opened and closed without touching handles if at all possible.

Place a trash can by the door if the door cannot be opened without touching the handle.

For single restrooms, provide signage and materials (paper towels and trash cans) for individuals to use without touching the handles, and consider providing a key so disinfection measures can be better controlled.

Place signs indicating that toilet lids (if present) should be closed before flushing.

Place signs asking customer and employees to wash hands before and after using the restroom.

Provide paper towels in restrooms and disconnect or tape-off hand air dryers.

Keep restrooms clean and properly disinfected. Consider the use of a cleaning schedule to ensure the restroom is cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout the day.

Ensure that there is no gathering of persons around restrooms area. Consider assigning a member of staff to adequately control this risk.

VENTILATION

Get fresh air to the customers and staff and properly utilize your ventilation system. Some ways to do this include:

- Encourage outdoor dining, and open doors and windows if possible.
- Maximize fresh air through your ventilation system.
- Maintain relative humidity at 40-60%.
- Ensure restroom is under negative pressure. If you don't know how, ask an HVAC professional for more information.
- Consider using portable HEPA filtration units.

Thoroughly clean HVAC intakes daily.

If fans such as pedestal fans or hard mounted fans are used in the restaurant, take steps to minimize air from fans blowing from one person directly at another individual. If fans are disabled or removed, employers should remain aware of, and take steps to prevent, heat hazards.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Review and update your floor plan to allow for physical distancing including common dining areas, and service areas.

Distance tables or customers so that the nearest customer at one table is at least 6 feet from another customer at another table. If tables cannot be moved, put signage on every other table or booth marking them as “PHYSICAL DISTANCE TABLE” or “RESERVED FOR YOUR SAFETY”. Consider Plexiglass partitions between booths as an alternative.

Limit the number of customers dining at one time. Consider starting with a “Reservation Only policy” or “call-ahead seating” to better space customers. Limit the group size to six or less.

Post signs at all entrances reminding guests about the need for physical distancing. Thank them for their patience as you work to ensure their safety. Provide hand sanitizer for guests to use, including contactless hand sanitizing stations wherever possible.

Ensure customers do not congregate whilst waiting for a table. Design a process to ensure guests stay separate while waiting to be seated. This can include floor markings, outdoor distancing, waiting in cars, etc. Consider an exit from the facility separate from the entrance.

Place plastic partitions between employees and customers wherever possible e.g., fast food windows, host stands, and bars.

MENUS

Consider writing a numbered menu on a wall/ large board that can be easily communicated at a distance.

Consider an app-based system or website for menus. Provide Wi-Fi codes to customers for easy access.

Use single use disposable menus.

STAFF/CUSTOMER INTERACTION

Limit contact between servers and guests as much as possible. Consider requiring servers to wear face coverings and gloves if they have direct contact with guests.

Use technology solutions where possible to reduce person-to-person interaction e.g.

- mobile ordering and menu tablets;
- text on arrival for seating;
- contactless payment options.

Determine ingress/egress to and from restrooms to establish paths that mitigate proximity for guests and staff.

PAYMENTS

If practical, physical barriers such as partitions or Plexiglas barriers at registers are acceptable.

Encourage credit card use over cash, when possible.

BARS

Consider providing table-only service for alcoholic beverages.

Mark areas of the bar 6 feet apart for customers to maintain physical distancing. Alternatively, consider handing out signs at the bar that customers can use to put on either side of them to maintain physical distancing.

ORDERING, PICK-UP & DELIVERY

It is important to observe established food safety practices for time/temperature control, preventing cross contamination, cleaning hands, no sick workers, and storage of food, etc. during pick-up and delivery of food.

Ensure employees wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, after blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing, or after touching their face and other regular hand contact surfaces, e.g., door handles, and doorbells.

If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Make sure to read the label and follow manufacturer's instructions on use.

Wherever possible, take payments over the phone or internet rather than taking a cash payment.

PICK UP

Discuss at the point of order with the customer to find out if they are self-isolating / showing any signs of symptoms.

Establish designated pick-up zones for customers to help maintain social distancing.

Remind third-party delivery drivers and any suppliers that you have internal distancing requirements.

DELIVERY

The driver should avoid coming into the main kitchen area and excessive contact with kitchen staff. He/she must maintain physical distancing of 6 feet. The driver should wash their hands with soap and water (minimum 20 seconds) both on arrival and returning to the kitchen.

Have kitchen staff 'box up' the food and place in a low risk area of the kitchen/business ready for the driver to pick up and deliver. This area should regularly be sanitised throughout the day and staff should wash their hands after each handover.

The vehicle must be clean and tidy. There should be no smoking in the vehicle.

Practice social distancing when delivering food, e.g., offering "no touch" deliveries and sending text alerts or calling when deliveries have arrived.

Prepared and cooked/ ready-to-eat foods should be packaged in a single-use disposable, lidded container. This should not be returned by the customer for re-use.

Hot food should be kept hot, ideally above 63°C/145°F. This may need to be packed in an insulated box. For delivery, it is recommended to keep distances short and times limited to within 30 minutes.

Foods that normally require refrigeration (e.g. cold desserts, dairy products, cold meats, fish) must be kept cold whilst being transported. The target temperature for cold foods is 5°C/41°F or below. Consider use of:

- Refrigerated units
- Insulated boxes with a coolant gel, ice packs or in a cool bag.

Keep foods separated to avoid cross contamination, e.g., keeping raw foods separated from cooked and ready-to-eat foods.

Ensure that any wrapping and packaging used for food transport is done so that contamination of the food is prevented.

Routinely clean and disinfect coolers and insulated bags used to deliver foods.

REFERENCES

- US Food & Drugs Administration - Guidance for Food Establishments
- National Restaurant Association - COVID-19 REOPENING GUIDANCE - A GUIDE FOR THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY
- American Industrial Hygiene Association® (AIHA®) - Reopening: Guidance for the Restaurant Industry