

COVID-19 Guidance for Food Establishments



General information

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. There are many types of human coronaviruses, including some that commonly cause mild upper-respiratory tract illnesses. COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a novel (or new) coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans.

How you can help prevent the spread of COVID-19

CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.

CDC recommends everyday preventive actions for everyone, including service industry workers and customers:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Actively encourage sick employees to stay home

In addition to your employee health policy excluding or restricting food handlers with vomiting, diarrhea, fever with sore throat, infected wounds on the hands and arms, and jaundice, watch for the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.

Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.

Maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

Business should review CDC's interim guidance for businesses and employers for planning and responding to coronavirus disease and the FDA's Retail Food Protection: Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook.

COVID-19 and Food

Currently, there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. However, the virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from person-to-person in some communities in the U.S. The CDC recommends that if you are sick, stay home until you are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others.

Anyone handling, preparing and serving food should always follow safe food handling procedures, such as washing hands and surfaces often.

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Perform routine environmental cleaning

CDC recommends routine cleaning all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.

Disinfection expected to be effective against COVID-19

Sanitizers (such as QUAT and chlorine) used at concentrations with dilution levels for food contact surfaces are not effective against COVID-19. The CDC recommends the cleaning and disinfection of rooms or areas those with suspected or with confirmed COVID-19 have visited.

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.). Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection products used for application instructions, additional personal protective equipment requirements, and proper ventilation.

If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection. For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA registered household disinfectants should be effective.

- Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses if appropriate for the surface when properly diluted. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3 cup) bleach per gallon of water or
 - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
- Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses.

After disinfection-level chemicals are used on food contact surfaces, they must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized with chemicals and concentrations approved for food contact surfaces.

Food Handler Safety Training Card

In an effort to increase social distancing as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Food Handler Safety Training Card (Health Card) program is suspended until May 1, 2020. Food Handlers will not be required to have their cards with them and new employees or employees that need to renew their cards will be able to temporarily work without cards.

Links

General information

CDC: www.cdc.gov/covid-19

FDA: www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19

SNHD: www.snhd.info/coronavirus

Guidance for businesses and employers

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fguidance-business-response.html

Cleaning and disinfection recommendations

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html

List of disinfectants

www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2