

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



Considerations for Restaurants and Bars

Updated Sept. 6, 2020

[Print](#)

As restaurants and bars resume operations in some areas of the United States, CDC offers the following considerations for ways in which operators can protect employees, customers, and communities and slow the spread of COVID-19. Restaurants and bars can determine, in collaboration with [state and local health officials](#), whether and how to implement these considerations, making adjustments to meet the needs and circumstances of the local community. Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, acceptable, and tailored to the needs of each community. These considerations are meant to supplement—**not replace**—any state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which businesses must comply.

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind

The more an individual interacts with others, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in a restaurant or bar setting as follows:

- **Lowest Risk:** Food service limited to drive-through, delivery, take-out, and curbside pick up.
- **More Risk:** Drive-through, delivery, take-out, and curbside pick up emphasized. On-site dining limited to outdoor seating. Seating capacity reduced to allow tables to be spaced at least 6 feet apart.
- **Even More Risk:** On-site dining with both indoor and outdoor seating. Seating capacity reduced to allow tables to be spaced at least 6 feet apart.
- **Highest Risk:** On-site dining with both indoor and outdoor seating. Seating capacity **not** reduced and tables **not** spaced at least 6 feet apart.

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is thought that the virus may spread to hands from a contaminated surface and then to the nose or mouth, causing infection. Therefore, personal prevention practices (such as [handwashing](#), [staying home when sick](#)) and environmental [cleaning and disinfection](#) are important principles that are covered in this document. Fortunately, there are a number of actions operators of restaurants and bars can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread.

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Restaurants and bars may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19 among employees and customers.

- **Staying Home when Appropriate**

- Educate employees about when they should [stay home](#) and when they can return to work.
 - Actively encourage employees who are sick or have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees are aware of these policies.
 - [Employees should stay home](#) if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
 - Employees who have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#).
 - CDC's criteria can help inform when employees they may return to work:
 - [If they have been sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [If they have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)

- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

- Require frequent employee [handwashing](#) (e.g. before, during, and after preparing food; after touching garbage) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and increase monitoring to ensure adherence.
- In addition to any state or local requirements regarding glove use in restaurant operations, glove use is **only** recommended when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash and when handling used or dirty food service items.
 - Employees should always wash their hands after removing gloves.
- Encourage employees to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

- **Cloth Face Coverings**

- Require the use of [cloth face coverings](#) among all staff, as feasible. Face coverings are **most** essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Information should be provided to staff on [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
 - Note: [Cloth face coverings](#) should **not** be placed on:
 - Babies and children younger than 2 years old
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance
- [Cloth face coverings](#) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. [Cloth face coverings](#) are not surgical masks, respirators, or personal protective equipment.

- **Adequate Supplies**

- Ensure adequate supplies to support [healthy hygiene](#) behaviors. Supplies include soap, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (placed on every table, if supplies allow), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans.
- **Signs and Messages**
 - Post [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to [stop the spread](#) of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#).
 - Include messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 when communicating with vendors, staff, and customers (such as on business websites, in emails, and on [social media accounts](#)).
 - Find free CDC print and digital resources at the [bars and restaurant page](#), as well as on CDC's [communications resources main page](#).

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Restaurants and bars may consider several implementing strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**
 - [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces (e.g., door handles, cash registers, workstations, sink handles, bathroom stalls) at least daily, or as much as possible and as required by food safety requirements. Clean shared objects (e.g., payment terminals, tables, countertops/bars, receipt trays, condiment holders) between each use.
 - Continue to follow all required safety laws, regulations, and rules.
 - Use products that meet [EPA disinfection criteria](#) and that are appropriate for the surface. Allow the disinfectant to remain on the surface for the contact time recommended by the manufacturer.
 - Establish a disinfection routine and train staff on proper cleaning timing and procedures to ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants.
 - Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces with an EPA-approved food contact surface sanitizer. If a food-contact surface must be disinfected for a specific reason, such as a blood or bodily fluid cleanup or deep clean in the event of likely contamination with SARS-CoV-2, use the following procedure: wash, rinse, disinfectant according to the label instructions for the disinfectant, rinse, then sanitize with a food-contact surface sanitizer.
 - Ensure that cleaning or disinfecting product residues are not left on table surfaces. Residues could cause allergic reactions or cause someone to ingest the chemicals.
 - Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of disinfectants to avoid food contamination and harm to employees and other individuals. This includes storing products securely away from children.
 - Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash. [Wash hands](#) after removing gloves.

- **Shared Objects**

- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.
- Limit any sharing of food, tools, equipment, or supplies by staff members.
- Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high-touch materials (e.g., serving spoons) to the extent possible; otherwise, limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of workers at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
- Avoid using or sharing items that are reusable, such as menus, condiments, and any other food containers. Instead, use disposable or digital menus, single serving condiments, and no-touch trash cans and doors.
- Use touchless payment options as much as possible, if available. Ask customers and employees to exchange cash or card payments by placing on a receipt tray or on the counter rather than by hand to avoid direct hand to hand contact. [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces such as pens, counters, or hard surfaces between use and encourage patrons to use their own pens.
- Use disposable food service items (e.g., utensils, dishes, napkins, tablecloths). If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water, or in a dishwasher. Change and launder linen items (e.g., napkins and tablecloths) after each customer or party's use. Employees should [wash their hands](#) after removing their gloves or after handling used food service items.
- Avoid use of food and beverage utensils and containers brought in by customers.

- **Ventilation**

- Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors and prioritizing outdoor seating. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk to customers or employees (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).

- **Water Systems**

- To minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water, [take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., sink faucets, decorative fountains, drinking fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown.

- **Modified Layouts and Procedures**

- Change restaurant and bar layouts to ensure that all customer parties remain at least 6 feet apart (e.g., marking tables/stools that are not for use).
- Limit seating capacity to allow for [social distancing](#).
- Offer drive-through, curbside take out, or delivery options as applicable. Prioritize outdoor seating as much as possible.
- Ask customers to wait in their cars or away from the establishment while waiting to pick up food or when waiting to be seated. Inform customers of food pickup and dining protocols on the business' website and on posted signs.
- Discourage crowded waiting areas by using phone app, text technology, or signs to alert patrons when their table is ready. Avoid using "buzzers" or other shared objects.

- Consider options for dine-in customers to order ahead of time to limit the amount of time spent in the establishment.
- Avoid offering any self-serve food or drink options, such as buffets, salad bars, and drink stations.
- **Physical Barriers and Guides**
 - Install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart. Barriers can be useful in restaurant kitchens and at cash registers, host stands, or food pickup areas where maintaining physical distance of at least 6 feet is difficult.
 - Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signage, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart. Consider providing these guides where lines form, in the kitchen, and at the bar.
- **Communal Spaces**
 - Close shared spaces such as break rooms, if possible; otherwise stagger use and [clean and disinfect](#) between use.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Restaurants and bars may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- **Protections for Employees at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19**
 - Offer options for employees at [higher risk for severe illness](#) (including older adults and people of all ages with certain underlying medical conditions) that limits their exposure risk (e.g., modified job responsibilities such as managing inventory rather than working as a cashier, or managing administrative needs through telework).
 - Consistent with applicable law, develop policies to protect the privacy of persons at [higher risk for severe illness in accordance with applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations](#).
- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Be aware of local or state policies and recommendations related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.
- **Staggered or Rotated Shifts and Sittings**
 - Rotate or stagger shifts to limit the number of employees in the restaurant or bar at the same time.
 - Stagger and limit dining times to minimize the number of customers in the establishment.
 - When possible, use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for social distancing (maintaining distance of approximately 6 feet) between employees and others, especially if social distancing is recommended by state and local health authorities.
- **Gatherings**
 - Avoid group events, gatherings, or meetings where social distancing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained.
- **Travel and Transit**

- For employees who commute to work using public transportation or ride sharing, encourage them to use transportation options that minimize close contact with others (e.g., walking or biking, driving or riding by car – alone or with household members only) or consider offering the following support:
 - Ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to [Protect Yourself When Using Transportation](#).
 - Allow employees to shift their hours so they can commute during less busy times.
 - Ask employees to [wash their hands](#) as soon as possible after their trip.
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
 - Designate a staff person for each shift to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All staff members should know who this person is and how to contact them..
- **Communication Systems**
 - Put systems in place for:
 - Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having staff self-report to the establishment’s point of contact if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with [health information sharing regulations for COVID-19](#) [🔗](#) (e.g. see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” in the **Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below**), and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.
 - Notifying staff, customers, and the public of business closures, and restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).
- **Leave (Time Off) Policies**
 - Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable employees to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or [caring for someone who is sick](#).
 - Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
 - Leave policies should be flexible and not punish people for taking time off and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
 - Develop policies for return-to-work after COVID-19 illness. CDC’s [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#) can inform these policies.
- **Back-Up Staffing Plan**
 - Monitor absenteeism of employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
- **Staff Training**
 - Train all employees in safety actions.
 - Conduct training virtually, or ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during training.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**

- Conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or [symptom checking](#)) of staff safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations.
 - Consider using examples of screening methods in CDC's [General Business FAQs](#) as a guide.
- **Support Coping and Resilience**
 - Promote employees eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
 - Encourage employees to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
 - Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746

Preparing for Sick Employees


Restaurants and bars may consider implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

- **Advise Sick Employees of Home Isolation Criteria**
 - Communicate to sick employees that they should not return to work until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).
- **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**
 - Make sure that employees know they should not come to work if they are sick, and they should notify their manager or other designated COVID-19 point of contact if they become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.
 - Immediately separate employees or customers with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (i.e., fever, cough, shortness of breath). Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility, depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
- **Clean and Disinfect**
 - Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#) them.
 - Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaning and disinfection products](#) [↗](#), including storing them securely away from children.
- **Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts**
 - In accordance with state and local laws, restaurant and bar operators should notify [local health officials](#) and staff immediately of any case of COVID-19 among employees, while maintaining confidentiality in accordance with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) [↗](#).
 - Advise those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop. Critical infrastructure workers may refer to [CDC Guidance for Critical Infrastructure Workers](#), if applicable.

Communication Resources


RESTAURANT AND BARS FOLLOW THESE 5 SAFETY STEPS
to keep us all healthy

- 1 STAY HOME IF YOU DON'T FEEL WELL**
or if you tested positive for COVID-19 or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- 2 WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN WITH SOAP AND WATER**
for at least 20 seconds, especially before, during, and after preparing food and after handling garbage




5 Safety Steps for Staff

Restaurants and Bars: follow these 5 safety steps to keep us all healthy

[Download](#)  [PDF – 290 KB]


RESTAURANTS AND BARS
Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

LOWER RISK → **HIGHER RISK**




Assess Your Risk

Use this graphic to assess risk


[Download](#)  [image 586 KB]

Letter for staff




Letter to Staff Template

Send out a customized letter to your staff to inform them about steps taken to protect them.

[Download](#)  [DOC – 64 KB]


DAILY CHECKLIST FOR MANAGERS OF RESTAURANTS AND BARS



- Urge employees to stay home if they feel unwell, tested positive for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days.
- Require employees to frequently wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before, during, and after preparing food and after touching garbage.
- Develop a schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, bathrooms, cash registers, tables, countertops, receipt.

Daily Checklist for Managers of Restaurants and Bars

Managers can use this helpful checklist

[Download](#)  [PDF – 1 page]

Other Resources





Cloth Face Coverings

- Require the use of [cloth face coverings](#) among all staff, as feasible. Face coverings are **most** essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Information should be provided to staff on [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
 - Note: [Cloth face coverings](#) should **not** be placed on:
 - Babies and children younger than 2 years old
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance
- [Cloth face coverings](#) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. [Cloth face coverings](#) are not surgical masks, respirators, or personal protective equipment.

Adequate Supplies

- Ensure adequate supplies to support [healthy hygiene](#) behaviors. Supplies include soap, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (placed on every table, if supplies allow), paper towels, tissues, disinfectant wipes, cloth face coverings (as feasible), and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans.

Signs and Messages

- Post [signs](#) in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances, in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#)  and describe how to [stop the spread](#)  of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#)  .
- Include messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 when communicating with vendors, staff, and customers (such as on business websites, in emails, and on [social media accounts](#)).
- Find free CDC print and digital resources at the [bars and restaurant page](#), as well as on CDC's [communications resources main page](#).
- [Latest COVID-19 information](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection](#)
- [Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [COVID-19 Prevention](#)
- [Handwashing information](#)
- [Face coverings](#)
- [Social Distancing](#)
- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions for Businesses](#)
- [Persons at higher risk](#)
- [Managing Stress and Coping](#)
- [HIPAA and COVID-19](#) 
- [CDC communication resources](#)
- [Community Mitigation](#)

Last Updated Sept. 6, 2020

Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), Division of Viral Diseases