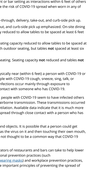

COMMUNITY, WORK & SCHOOL

Considerations for Restaurant and Bar Operators

Updated Nov. 18, 2020 Languages Print

On This Page

- Guiding Principles
- Reduce Spread
- Healthy Environments
- Healthy Operations
- Sick Employees
- Communication Resources
- Other Resources

CDC
Considerations for Bars ...
RESTAURANT
CDC
cdc.gov/coronavirus

As restaurants and bars resume and continue operations in some areas of the United States, CDC offers the following considerations for ways in which operators can reduce risk for employees, customers, and communities and slow the spread of COVID-19. Restaurants and bars can determine, in collaboration with state, local, territorial, or tribal 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, 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.

Guidance for customers on reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 when dining at a restaurant can be found here.

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. Masks may reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread when they are consistently used by customers and employees, especially when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in a restaurant or bar setting as interactions within 6 feet of others increase, as described below. Masks may reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread when worn in any of these risk scenarios.

- **Lowest Risk:** Food service limited to drive-through, delivery, take-out, and curb-side pick up.
- **More Risk:** Drive-through, delivery, take-out, and curb-side pick up emphasized. On-site dining limited to outdoor seating. Seating capacity reduced to allow tables to be spaced at least 6 feet apart.
- **Higher Risk:** On-site dining with indoor seating capacity reduced to allow tables to be spaced at least 6 feet apart. And/or on-site dining with outdoor seating, but tables **not** spaced at least six feet apart.
- **Highest Risk:** On-site dining with indoor seating. Seating capacity **not** reduced and tables **not** spaced at least 6 feet apart.

COVID-19 is mostly spread when people are physically near (within 6 feet) a person with COVID-19 or have direct contact with that person. When people with COVID-19 cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe, they produce **respiratory droplets**. Infections occur mainly through exposure to respiratory droplets when a person is in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.

There is evidence that under certain conditions, people with COVID-19 seem to have infected others

Community, Work & School
Health Equity +
Community Mitigation Framework
Cleaning & Disinfecting +
Workplaces & Businesses −
Guidance for Businesses & Employers
FAQs for Workplaces & Businesses
Testing in Non-Healthcare Workplaces
Contact Tracing in Non-Healthcare Workplaces
Employer Information for Office Buildings
Respirator Shortages in Non-Healthcare Workplaces
Limiting Workplace Violence Related to COVID-19
Heat Stress Prevention
Worker Support +
Essential Services +
Specific Industries −
Restaurants & Bars
Preparing Small Businesses
Resuming Business Toolkit
Schools & Child Care +
Colleges & Universities +
Parks, Sports & Recreation +
Community Organizations & Gatherings +
Shared & Congregate Housing +
Retirement Communities +

Homeless Populations +
Correctional & Detention Facilities +
Tribal Communities +
Guidance Documents
Communication Resources +
What's New

Get Email Updates

To receive email updates about COVID-19, enter your email address:

Email Address

What's this? Submit

who were more than 6 feet away. This is called airborne transmission. These transmissions occurred within enclosed spaces that had inadequate ventilation. Available data indicate that it is much more common for the virus that causes COVID-19 to spread through close contact with a person who has COVID-19 than through airborne transmission.

Respiratory droplets can also land on surfaces and objects. It is possible that a person could get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes. Spread from touching surfaces is not thought to be a common way that COVID-19 spreads.

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. Personal prevention practices (such as handwashing, staying home when sick, and wearing masks) and workplace prevention practices, like environmental cleaning and disinfection, are important principles of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Restaurants and bars may implement several strategies 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 (for example, sick leave) without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees are aware of these policies. See the Maintaining Healthy Operations section below for suggestions.
        - 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 may return to work:
            - If they have been sick with COVID-19
            - If they have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19
- **Masks**

  CDC recommends masks to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread. Masks are currently recommended for employees and for customers as much as possible when not eating or drinking and when social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. These masks (sometimes called cloth masks) are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is infected. They are not appropriate substitutes for masks used by workers for personal protective equipment (PPE) such as surgical masks or respirators. (More information on masks used for PPE can be found here.)

    - Consider requiring the use of masks among all staff. Masks are **most** essential in times when physical distancing is difficult. Information should be provided to staff on proper use, removal, and washing of masks.
        - Note: Masks 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 mask without assistance
    - Employees should avoid touching their masks once they are on their faces. Employees should wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after touching masks on their faces.
- **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.
    - Ensure gloves are worn by employees when they are completing these activities:
        - Removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash
        - Handling used or dirty food service items
        - Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces; read and follow the directions on the label to ensure safe and effective use of disinfectant.
    - Employees should always wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after removing gloves.
    - Encourage employees to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue (or use the inside of their elbow). 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 for handwashing, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
    - Employees should avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with gloved or unwashed hands.

- **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, masks (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 for both employees and customers and describe how to stop the spread of germs such as by properly wearing a mask and properly washing hands.
  - 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).
  - Communicate the prevention steps the restaurant or bar is taking and any changes in protocols 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 implement several 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, and as much as possible. 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. **Always read and follow the directions on the label** to ensure safe and effective use.
    - When cleaning and disinfecting, wear gloves appropriate for the disinfectant being used. Additional personal protective equipment may also be needed.
    - 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 used or dirty 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, disinfect according to the label instructions with a product approved for food contact surfaces, 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 (menus viewed on cellphones), 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 counters, or hard surfaces between use. If pens are needed for some purposes, disinfect between uses and/or encourage customers 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 used or dirty non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed, rinsed, and sanitized to meet food safety requirements. 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**

As noted above, available data indicate that it is much more common for the virus that causes COVID-19 to spread through close contact with a person who has COVID-19 than through airborne transmission. There is evidence that under certain conditions, people with COVID-19 seem to have infected others who were more than 6 feet away. This is called airborne transmission. These transmissions occurred in indoor spaces with inadequate ventilation. In general, being outdoors and in spaces with good ventilation reduces the risk of exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.

- 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).
- Consider improving the engineering controls using the building ventilation system. Consult with experienced heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning (HVAC) professionals when considering changes to HVAC systems and equipment. This may include some or all of the following activities:
    - Increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces, whenever feasible.
    - Increase outdoor air ventilation, using caution in highly polluted areas. With a lower occupancy level in the building, this increases the effective dilution ventilation per person.
    - Disable demand-controlled ventilation (DCV) controls that reduce air supply based on occupancy or temperature during occupied hours.
    - Open minimum outdoor air dampers to reduce or eliminate HVAC recirculation, if practical. In mild weather, this will not affect thermal comfort or humidity. However, this may be difficult to do in cold, hot, or humid weather.
    - Improve central air filtration to MERV-13 or to as high as possible without significantly diminishing design airflow.
- Inspect filter housing and racks to ensure appropriate filter fit and check for ways to minimize filter bypass.
- Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
- Consider running the HVAC system at maximum outside airflow for 2 hours before and after occupied times.

Additional guidance can be found in ASHRAE Standard 62.1, Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality.

- **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 if there has been 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., removing tables/stools/chairs, marking tables/stools/chairs 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's 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. This limits the use of shared serving utensils, handles, buttons, or touchscreens and helps customers to stay seated and at least 6 feet apart from people who do not live in their household.
- **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, require mask use, and clean and disinfect between use.
    - 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.

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 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 who do not live in the same household cannot be maintained. See the Modified Layouts and Procedures section above for suggestions on social distancing.
- **Travel and Transit**
  - Encourage employees 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).
  - For employees who commute to work using public transportation or ride sharing:
    - Ask employees to follow the CDC guidance on how to protect yourself when using transportation and to wear masks on public transportation.
    - Ask them to wash their hands as soon as possible after their trip.
    - Consider allowing employees to shift their hours so they can commute during less busy times.
- **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 are 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 implement 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, territorial, tribal, or local laws, restaurant and bar operators should notify the health officials in their jurisdiction 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.
  - Consider collaborating with health officials in your jurisdiction to determine whether and how to implement employee COVID-19 testing strategies and which one(s) would be most appropriate for your circumstances.

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
Pick up or delivery
Outdoor seating at least 6 feet apart
Outdoor & indoor seating at least 6 feet apart
Outdoor & indoor seating no restrictions
cdc.gov/coronavirus

Assess Your Risk

Use this graphic to assess risk

Download
[image 586 KB]

Letter for staff
Dear 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

- 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 Nov. 18, 2020

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

HAVE QUESTIONS?
Visit CDC-INFO
Call 800-232-4636
Email CDC-INFO
Open 24/7

CDC INFORMATION
About CDC
Jobs
Funding
Policies
File Viewers & Players

Privacy
FOIA
No Fear Act
OIG
Nondiscrimination
Accessibility

CONNECT WITH CDC

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
USA.gov
CDC Website Exit Disclaimer

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

Español
繁體中文
Tiếng Việt
한국어
Tagalog
Русский
العربية
Kreyòl Ayisyen
Français
Polski
Português
Italiano
Deutsch
日本語
فارسی
English