Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for the Restaurant Sector, Hosts, Servers, Cooks and Dishwashers During COVID-19

OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread. Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Make sure to follow any requirements and public health orders. You should be aware of the most current:

- requirements of the local public health unit
- relevant bylaws in the municipality in which you do business
- requirements under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act that are applicable to your business
- directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health that are applicable to your industry or business

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations.

To learn more about those rights, refer to the following links:

- Workers’ Rights
- Duties of Employers and Other Persons

Note: Employers should consult the COVID-19 response framework available at this link to determine additional workplace requirements for their region.

BEST PRACTICES

We know that every workplace is unique which makes it so important that every employer assess functions carried out by their workforce to ensure they take action to protect against the hazards presented by exposure to COVID-19. The Ontario government has developed a guide to help employers develop and maintain a COVID-19 workplace safety plan. The guide provides a framework for assessing risks of COVID-19 transmission and planning how to mitigate those risks. According to the Re-opening Ontario Act, all businesses, including all those operating during a lockdown or shutdown, must have a written safety plan by law. Visit the COVID-19 safety checklist, where employers can ensure their COVID-19 workplace safety plan contains all key elements to help protect workers, customers and the general public. Practicing physical distancing (staying 2 metres away from others); minimizing contact with droplets of mucous or saliva; keeping hands, surfaces and objects clean; and preventing contact with potentially infected people are all critically important measures. Other information on how you can protect yourself, your workers and your clients is available on ontario.ca/coronavirus.

We have provided some recommendations below for your consideration. Please keep in mind that introducing any new protective measures should be done as part of a full review of other workplace hazards - not just COVID-19. Employers should consult with joint health and safety committees/health and safety representatives on measures to protect workers in the workplace.

Some workplaces may already have some existing control measures in place that may help reduce the risk to workers. Regular ‘check-ins’ on the effectiveness of controls is highly recommended.

RECOGNIZE HAZARDS AND ASSESS RISK

For hosts, servers, cooks, dishwashers and other restaurant sector employees we recognize that the nature of the work you do may require interaction with people, including customers, suppliers and co-workers, as well as contact with surfaces. You could potentially come in contact with droplets from these interactions. COVID-19 can travel in respiratory droplets that are released
into the environment by laughing, coughing or sneezing. These interactions, as well as the need to touch surfaces, could increase the likelihood that you or your customers could come in contact with the virus.

Take a look at where you might minimize those risks within your work environment. Consult public health information to learn more about the symptoms of COVID-19. Ensure that you stay home if you have symptoms. Take a look at the controls below to see how they may assist you.

**CONTROLS**

All existing safety, sanitation, and infection control standards such as those established by licensing agencies and public health authorities are still in effect and enforced. Existing controls may help to reduce the risk of exposure for workers. Follow the requirements and guidance of your local public health unit. To protect yourself from some of the risk of exposure to COVID-19, consider the following options:

**Keep Informed and Communicate**

- Perform screening of employees or essential visitors in accordance with regulations. Refer to on-site health screening guidance for additional information. Screen customers for COVID-19 symptoms and other risk factors (for example, close contact to known cases, recent international travel) before each in-person interaction. This may include reminders to via email, text messages, telephone messages, etc. If anyone develops symptoms of COVID-19, implement procedures for keeping the individual away from others. For further guidance on screening procedures, consult the Ministry of Health. Ensure measures are in place to prevent anyone from missing the screening protocol.
- Monitor and comply with local public health requirements and orders regarding tracking of customer contact information and contact tracing. As expectations fluctuate with colour requirements, refer to the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act to ensure you are in compliance with current contact tracing requirements, and maintain a list of individuals in the event this is required. This could include first and last name, phone numbers or email address. Request that customers and contractors inform the restaurant if they become ill with COVID-19 within 2 weeks of their last visit.
- Make sure it is clear that no-one is permitted to enter if they have symptoms of COVID-19. For example, install clear signage at points of entry. Consult public health information to learn more about the symptoms of COVID-19. People with symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate, notify their employer and call a doctor or healthcare provider.
- Post signage outlining the safety protocols that must be followed prior to entering (e.g. hand washing, physical distancing, avoid touching surfaces, etc.).
- Share information in all languages spoken by your workers and customers, if possible. Provide information in ways that are easy to understand, like graphics and pictures, and use resources from the Ontario Government. WSPS Sector Posters are also available.
- Update your business’s voicemail, email, social media, website and other external communications to inform clients of changes to the business operations.
- Encourage everyone to monitor their own symptoms at all times and ensure that they know where to find assessment tools. Employees and customers can use the self-assessment at home if they have any symptoms. Ensure workers know who their workplace contact is and how to get in touch with them in case the self-assessment, public health or their health care provider suggests they self-isolate, or if they start to experience symptoms at work.
- You must develop a COVID-19 safety plan to assist in putting the controls into place to make work activities safer for everyone. Talk to your workers and your JHSC members or health and safety representatives, if any, for their input on the plan. Share the plan with all workplace parties when it is done. This will help ensure your workers and others understand how you plan to manage the risks of COVID-19. Review, evaluate and update your plan regularly. For more information to help create your safety plan, refer to Ontario.ca and the WSPS Pandemic Playbook.
- Provide clear information and instruction to your workers and customers. Make sure they know what they need to do to protect themselves and others. Ensure they know how to follow the work and hygiene practices in your plan, including all new safety measures. Employers need to train workers on possible COVID-19 transmission points in the workplace, what steps are being taken to protect them, and how they can protect themselves, including frequent hand washing especially
before and after each customer interaction, sanitizing items and surfaces more frequently, following tool disinfection procedures, and not touching their face.

- Follow all municipal and local public health warnings, directions and recommendations related to COVID-19. Consider establishing regular times to check in with public health updates and retrain/revise practices as needed.
- Remind workers about available social and mental health supports, and encourage them to use these resources.
- Share information to help your workers stay healthy while commuting or travelling for work. If public transit or ride-sharing is required, follow local health authority direction and consider consulting additional guidance for Taxi and Ride Sharing Services.
- Monitor local public health information and evaluate risk of travel between regions. Consider referring to resources such as the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) Regional Risk Tools and Tips.
- Ensure that measures you decide on are well communicated.

**Eliminate or Minimize Exposure**

**Physical Distancing**

- Install physical distancing markers throughout various areas of the restaurant, including the entrance area outside the premises, if appropriate, to ensure workers and customers maintain a physical distance of 2 meters.
- Limit the number of workers working in one space so that they can distance themselves from each other by:
  - Staggering shifts and break times and scheduling more time for cleaning in between customers.
  - Practicing physical distancing during breaks.
  - Where possible, have their workstations positioned to maintain the physical distance.
- Consider installing hard-plastic transparent barriers where physical distancing is not an option (for example between workstations or service counters).
- Consider implementing an Entry App that informs customers that it is their turn to enter the venue.
- Consider implementing a priority entry system.

**Disinfection and Sanitizing**

- Encourage workers to maintain clean workstations, debit machines, cash registers, counters, and equipment. Provide hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for workers and customers to use upon entry. Consider having them available near the entryway, waiting areas, and other high-traffic areas.
- Provide a safe place for individuals to dispose of used sanitizing wipes and disposable protective equipment. Empty and clean waste containers on a regular basis.
- Surfaces that come in contact with workers and customers must be disinfected prior to and after each touch point.
- Pay particular attention to frequently touched surfaces and common areas, such as entrances, counters, hand railings, child booster seats, and washrooms.
- Clean and disinfect/sterilize equipment, tables or countertops between customers/employees.
- Clean and disinfect/sterilize equipment such as PIN/touch pads, dishwashers/dishwashing wands, freezer/cooler handles, and other equipment (i.e. tools, knives, mops, brooms, buckets etc.) between clients/employees. Public Health Ontario offers more information on cleaning and disinfection protocols.
- Consider installing contactless hand washing or sanitizing stations at entrance ways.
- Where possible, assign employees to screen customers. Ensure employees and customers are utilizing sanitizing products, following physical distancing protocols and other controls and public health requirements.
- Public Health Ontario offers more information on clean and disinfect protocols.

**Hand and Respiratory Hygiene**

- Ensure hand-washing facilities are available and all are in good working order.
- Proper handwashing is key. Workers should be trained in the proper hand washing technique and avoid touching their face. Extra handwashing is a good idea for everyone – and when that’s not possible, a hand sanitizer with minimum alcohol content of 60% should be used frequently.
Encourage workers and visitors to wash their hands before entering the workplace, and after contact with others or with surfaces others have touched. Be sure to include time for handwashing before breaks, at shift changes, after making or receiving deliveries, etc. Be sure to keep an adequate supply of soap, paper towels, etc. Encourage proper cough and sneeze etiquette through the use of posted reminders and other communications. Encourage the wearing of face coverings or masks when indoors, even if not required by local or provincial regulations.

Customer
- Consider only having customers book reservations online or by phone only, restricting walk-ins.
- Consider having customers order online or by phone with pick up at curbside at a scheduled time or have customer call notifying of their arrival.
- Consider limiting customer capacity if unable to maintain physical distancing.
- Minimize cash payments and encourage touchless transactions by using “tap” debit or credit or e-transfer. Where “tap” is not possible, clean and disinfect payment devices between customers.
- 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. You may also refer to the cdc guidance for restaurants for additional information.
- Remove open self-serve food and drink services. Replace self-serve condiments with individual packages
- Where possible, assign workers to ensure staff and customers are using sanitizing products and following physical distancing protocols and masking policies. Staff must screen customers prior to entrance. Refer to on-site health screening guidance for additional information.

Outdoor Patios
- The use of heating sources must also meet the requirements and recommendations set out by the Ontario Fire Marshall Office, Ontario Fire Code, Technical Standards & Safety Authority (TSSA) and local municipal bylaws.
- The use of heating devices with air circulating fans should be avoided in shared spaces.
- Heaters must not be used on or beneath combustible materials.
- Storage of heating device fuels must also comply with Provincial regulations, Ontario Fire Code and local municipality’s requirements. Propane cylinders must be kept outdoors at all times and stored in an upright position. Propane cylinders must be safely removed from heating device when storing the heater indoors.
- All heating devices must be operated and maintained as per manufacturer specifications and regulatory standards. Refer to the safety considerations for outdoor patio heaters resource.
- Consider installing carbon monoxide monitoring equipment in enclosed spaces where temporary heating equipment is in use.
- Employees should be trained on proper heating fuel handling, exchanges, igniting, maintenance (including detecting leaks) and proper storage according to regulations.
- Consider other risk factors associated with heating sources such as burns, fire, explosion, and electrical shocks.
- Ensure vehicle traffic exhaust or building exhausts does not enter enclosed outdoor patio spaces.
- Be mindful that outdoor facilities have additional safety risks for workers that have to be considered including site security and environmental factors (temperature, sun exposure, rain, snow, ice, debris, insects/pests, and local pollution).
- Ensure that patio setup has been established with a layout to maintain physical distancing during entry and exit.
- Based on the configuration and capacity of the outdoor patio, identify emergency egress routes and ensure they are posted/in compliance with regulatory requirements.

OTHER CONTROL MEASURES
- Limit the number of people sharing equipment or tools. Assign tools, equipment and workstations to a single user if possible or limit the number of users.
- Implement all possible measures to ensure physical distance and separation between people.
- Where appropriate, safely work/meet in outdoor spaces.
- Follow local health authority direction regarding ventilating spaces by opening windows and/or doors.
• Consider listing menu items on a board or providing laminated menus that can be disinfected between each use/touch point (e.g. remove paper menus/items that will be touched frequently by workers and customers).
• Ensure physical distancing is maintained between servers’ tables and consider one way walkways for both customers and servers to maintain physical distancing.
• Consider having customers order online or by phone with pick up at curbside at a scheduled time or have customer call to notify of their arrival.
• If using a third party delivery service, ensure they are up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 prevention knowledge and are following safe practices.
• For any soiled uniforms and/or laundry minimize shaking and disturbance of soiled materials. If possible, arrange to ensure the laundering of items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely and clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry and sanitation equipment.

In addition to the above recommendations, employers should determine whether personal protective equipment (PPE)* needs to be part of their hazard control plan. The need for PPE should be based on a risk assessment that may take into consideration input from the local public health unit. Although proper use of PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other control measures.

*NOTE: Please be reminded that face coverings do not constitute PPE and are not an appropriate substitute for physical distancing in the workplace.

To learn more about PPE as well as face coverings, please refer to these sections in the Guide to Developing your Workplace COVID-19 Safety Plan at ontario.ca or see the WSPS Pandemic Playbook.

POTENTIAL CASE OF, OR SUSPECTED EXPOSURE TO, COVID-19 AT YOUR WORKPLACE

There are steps that you will need to take if one of your workers has symptoms which may be related to COVID-19, or is diagnosed with COVID-19. For information regarding what to do, please refer to the information available on ontario.ca or you may find additional information on workplace outbreak guidance here.


EVALUATION

COVID-19 has presented all of us with challenges we have never seen before. It’s important to consider that any of the adjustments we are making today may need further adjustment tomorrow.

It is recommended that you take a look at your preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and adjust them if they are not working well enough or are causing other issues with your work. For example, if you decided to use goggles, but they are impeding your vision, or are making other tasks unnecessarily difficult, you may want to try a face shield instead. Or, if you decided you needed a certain kind of disinfectant that is no longer available, identifying alternative disinfecting products or solutions or switching to soap and water practices may be reasonable substitutes.

Bottom line? Plan to make regular check-ins and adjustments part of your COVID-19 infection prevention plans.

*For anyone who thinks they may have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please start by visiting the Ministry of Health website and taking a self-assessment.

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:
• Government of Ontario
• Government of Canada
The **Ontario Ministry of Health** is providing consistent updates on the provincial government’s response to the outbreak, including:
- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

**Public Health Ontario** is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:
- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

The Ontario government is supporting employers by setting up a portal to assist them in finding supplies and equipment through the [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](http://www.wsps.ca/COVID19).

**OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES**

**Health Canada** outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The **World Health Organization** is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

It also provides the most up-to-date information on:
- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

**Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers**

This site provides a tool to determine your local infection risk and corresponding tips for COVID-19 prevention in non-healthcare workplaces.

For more information visit [www.wsps.ca/COVID19](http://www.wsps.ca/COVID19)

**NOTE:** This document is intended for informational purposes only to provide an overview of the potential hazards posed in the workplace due to COVID-19. The information is current, to the best of our knowledge, as of the publication date, (Feb 2021). It is not intended as medical advice, to provide a comprehensive risk assessment for all workplaces, or to replace any legislated workplace safety obligations. WSPS has not endorsed and does not endorse any particular product or company as a solution to the risk presented by COVID-19. Due to the ongoing evolution of the situation in Ontario and around the world, this document may be used as a guide for employers in addition to guidance delivered by public health authorities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any use which is made of this document by any employer or individual, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of the employer or individual. WSPS and its partners, officers, directors, employees, agents, representatives, suppliers and service providers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions in content or for damages of any kind or nature suffered by any employer or any third party as a result of use of or reliance on this communication.