

COVID-19 Guidelines for Restaurants

Interim notice On November 16, Governor Inslee issued [proclamation 20-25.8](#) “Stay Safe-Stay Healthy” statewide restrictions to help slow the rapid spread of COVID-19 cases in our state. Unless extended, the restrictions will be in place until December 14, 2020.

Restaurants **must close indoor dining areas**. They may instead provide outdoor dining (limit table size to a maximum of 5 people), take-out, delivery, and drive through food and beverage services. All outdoor dining must comply with the [outdoor seating requirements](#). We recommend food establishments stack their indoor tables and chairs to discourage customer use. For more information, see:

- Governor’s Office - [Restaurant, Tavern, Breweries, Wineries and Distilleries Requirements](#)

On May 4, Governor Inslee announced “[Safe Start Washington](#)” a phased approach to recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Phase 1, restaurants are essential businesses that have remained open if they provide pick-up, drive-through, or delivery services and make changes to ensure customer and worker safety. No onsite dining is allowed during Phase 1. Once a county moves into Phase 2 or Phase 3, restaurants may reopen onsite dining if they meet the governor’s [Dine-In Restaurant and Tavern Requirements](#). At this time, Phase 4 industry specific information is not available. We will update our guidance when it becomes available.

Use the guidance below to help comply with the [governor’s requirements](#) for each phase and to ensure employee and customer safety while operating during this pandemic. [Washington State Retail Food Code](#) and the governor’s requirements are listed below. Recommendations are included under the heading “recommendations”. Consult with your [local health department](#) for county specific requirements or restrictions.

Public Health Investigations

Contact your local health department within 24 hours if you suspect COVID-19 is spreading in your workplace or if you are aware of 2 or more employees who developed confirmed or suspected COVID-19 within a 14-day period. Use the [DOH Employee Health & Decision Strategies guidance](#) and [DOH Checklist for Businesses with Suspected or Confirmed Cases of COVID-19](#) to determine next steps. You should work with local health to:

- confirm the number of probable and confirmed cases,
- determine close contacts,
- ensure control measures are in place, and

- verify that your business is following the Safe Start plan to prevent further workplace transmission.

You may be asked to provide a list of all potentially exposed employees and customers. In addition, temporary closure of your business may be required such as when inadequate control measures are in place or workplace transmission is high.

COVID-19 Safety Plan

Develop a written plan using the [Phase 3 Safe Start Plan Template](#). This plan must be retained onsite and made available to regulatory agencies upon request.

Styles of Service & Occupancy

Phase 1

- Onsite dining is not allowed. Provide pick-up, drive-through, or delivery services.

Recommendations

- Remove or stack tables and chairs if dining areas can be accessed by customers.
- Work with your local health department to ensure safe processes if making changes to your menu or style of service.
- If you choose to close, consider donating food using food safety recommendations in this [guide](#).

Phase 2 & Phase 3

- Indoor dining:
 - Do not exceed 50% of the maximum building occupancy determined by the fire code. Occupancy limit does not include employees.
 - Prohibited at taverns, breweries, wineries, distilleries (TBWD) and private clubs (such as Eagles, Elks, Moose, etc.) unless they meet certain requirements. For more information see the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) [Coronavirus Guidance for Licensees](#).
- Outdoor dining:
 - Do not exceed 50% capacity. Outdoor seating is not added to the maximum building occupancy, but must include physical distancing between tables.
 - Permanent or temporary outdoor structures may not have more than two walls to provide adequate ventilation. The limitation applies to both rigid and flexible walls.
 - For businesses who want to modify or add outdoor liquor service, visit the [LCB website](#) to access the Liquor Alterations Request Form.
- Bar-area seating:
 - Do not allow seating at a bar table or counter where customers sit or stand side-by-side. Close bar area seating that allows for the congregation of customers from separate parties.

- Counter-style seating is permitted in other areas of the establishment such as sushi bars and lunch counters, so long as 6 feet of physical distance is maintained between customers from different households and food workers.
- Dining tables and seating booths are allowed if they follow the same dining requirements in this guidance.

Recommendations

- Work with your [local health department](#) if making changes to add more outdoor seating.
- We encourage facilities that serve people at a [higher risk](#) for severe COVID-19 illness, such as nursing homes or retirement communities, to not provide communal dining. Instead provide in-room dining, pick-up, drive-through, or delivery services. If you choose to open communal dining, follow all Safe Start and Governor's requirements.

Customer Log

Maintain a daily log of all guests that **voluntarily** provide contact information, including customer names, phone/email, and time/date they were in the facility. Maintain the log for 30 days to help with contact tracing. For more information see:

- [Governor's Customer Log Memo](#)
- [Customer Log Template](#)

Customer Self-Service

Phase 1

- Close self-service at salad bars and buffets.
- Provide wrapped self-service condiments and disposable service ware, such as single-service packets or carry-out utensils.

Recommendations

- Discontinue product sampling and demonstration stations, except for single portions offered in response to a consumer's request from the service counter.
- Self-service of fountain drinks is acceptable when touchpoints are disinfected hourly, and all single-service utensils are stored behind the counter and provided to the customer by a food worker.

Phase 2 & Phase 3

- Self-service at salad bars, buffets, and other communal food sources and drink stations may resume if increased safety is provided through the following:
 - Physical distancing of customers in line.
 - All sneeze guards, utensils, and other customer-service equipment are properly in place and used.

- Any food that has been contaminated by customers or employees (i.e. touching food or sneezing and/or coughing along the service line) is discarded.
- Staff monitor the areas to maintain proper food temperature and customer usage.
- Serving utensil touchpoints are sanitized or replaced with clean utensils at least every hour in Phase 2 and every two hours in Phase 3.
- Ensure non-food contact surfaces, particularly touchpoints such as counters, hand rails, etc. are properly washed and disinfected at least every hour in Phase 2 and every two hours in Phase 3.
- Hand gel, with 60% alcohol, is available for customer use.
- Provide wrapped self-service condiments and disposable service ware, such as single-service packets or carry-out utensils.

Recommendations

- Discontinue product sampling and demonstration stations, except for single portions offered in response to a consumer's request from the service counter.

Customer Face Coverings

- Businesses may not serve customers or visitors who aren't wearing face coverings. Individuals with certain health or medical conditions or disabilities are exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering. Businesses can offer to provide accommodations such as curbside pick-up, delivery, scheduling of visits during non-peak hours. No one is required to carry proof or documentation of their health condition or disability.
- Customers must wear a face covering anytime they are not seated (such as while arriving, leaving, or going to the restroom) and while they are talking at tables and not eating.
- For more information see the [Overview of COVID-19 Statewide Face Covering Requirements](#)

Customer Health & Hygiene

- Stock onsite restrooms/sinks with adequate soap and paper towels.
- Provide hand gel at building entrance for all staff and customers, if available.
- Open screened doors/windows and use fans to increase ventilation of outdoor air, when possible.
- Adjust mechanical ventilation systems to bring in as much outside air as possible. Increase filters to MERV 13 if the HVAC can accommodate.

Customer Physical Distancing

Phase 1

- Use distance markers or another method to maintain 6 feet of distance between customers in lines in the lobby, waiting area, serving or ordering lines, beverage/condiment stations, and food pickup stations.
- Arrange flow of customers to eliminate bottlenecks and reduce crowding.

Recommendations

- Establish designated areas for pick-up and deliveries, limiting contact to the extent possible.
- Barriers should be a smooth, rigid surface that is easily cleanable and of sufficient height to provide adequate protection from coughs and sneezes from nearby booths or tables.

Phase 2 & Phase 3

- Standing is prohibited in any area of the establishment, except the lobby/waiting area.
- Use distance markers or another method to maintain 6 feet of distance between customers in lines in the lobby, waiting area, serving or ordering lines, beverage/condiment stations, and food pickup stations.
- Arrange flow of customers to eliminate bottlenecks and reduce crowding.
- Place tables and booths a minimum of 6 feet away from adjacent tables or use a physical barrier or wall to separate the booths or tables.

Recommendations

- Barriers should be a smooth, rigid surface that is easily cleanable and of sufficient height to provide adequate protection from coughs and sneezes from nearby booths or tables.

Menu, Ordering, & Payment

- Provide a menu using one of the following options:
 - Provide single-use disposable menus.
 - Reusable menus that are disinfected after each use.
 - Display menu options on a board or sign.
 - Use an app. service or website for customers to view the menu on personal devices.
- Use call-in/mobile ordering, contactless payment systems, or automated ordering, when possible.

Recommendations

- List allergens on the menu to reduce questions.
- Limit menu options to decrease the ordering time per customer.
- Disinfect check-out counters and payment touchpads at least every hour when in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and every 2 hours when in Phase 3.
- Provide handwashing or hand gel for employees handling payment.

Entertainment

Phase 1

- Live entertainment is prohibited.
- Vending and other game areas, including billiards, darts, and video games are prohibited.
- Indoor and outdoor card rooms are prohibited.

Phase 2 & Phase 3

- Live entertainment is prohibited.
- Vending and other game areas, including billiards, darts, and video games are prohibited.
- Indoor card rooms are prohibited. Outdoor card rooms must follow the Governor's requirements [here](#).

Phase 4

- Live entertainment is allowed.
- Vending and other game areas, including billiards, darts, and video games are allowed.
- Indoor and outdoor card rooms are allowed and must follow the Governor's requirements [here](#).

Signage

- Post signs at entrances and throughout the store to inform customers to:
 - Stay home if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Use cloth face coverings when visiting the establishment.
 - Practice proper physical distancing while in the establishment.

Recommendations

- Find COVID-19 specific posters and materials here:
 - [Washington State Coronavirus Response Partner Toolkit](#)
 - [King County Signs to Print and Post](#)
 - [CDC's COVID-19 Print Resources](#)

Sanitation

- Cleaning is a necessary first step for sanitizing and disinfecting chemicals to work effectively. Use soap and water to clean food and non-food contact surfaces.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces following routine procedures. Use an EPA registered product (such as chlorine, quaternary ammonia or iodine) at a concentration appropriate for sanitizing food contact surfaces.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch non-food contact surfaces frequently, such as customer restrooms, doors, handles for freezers/refrigerators, check-out counters, and payment touchpads.

- Use an [EPA registered product](#) at a concentration that has been shown to be effective against COVID-19. Follow label directions.
- If disinfectants are in short supply, use alternative disinfectants (for example, 1/3 cup of household bleach added to 1 gallon of water, or 70% alcohol solutions). Follow label instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Bleach solutions are effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.
- Phase 2 & 3: Disinfect any condiments typically left on the table (ketchup, soy sauce, etc.) after each dining group or provide single-use condiments.

Recommendations

- Disinfect non-food contact surfaces at least every hour when in Phase 1 and Phase 2, and every 2 hours when in Phase 3.
- See the NC State Extension Factsheets on COVID-19 Preventative Measures for more information:
 - [What is the Difference between Cleaning, Sanitizing, Disinfecting and Sterilizing?](#)
 - [Cleaning and Disinfection](#)

Employees Health & Hygiene

- Develop COVID-19 specific employee illness policies and procedures:
 - Screen workers for COVID-19 symptoms prior to each shift by following the [Daily COVID-19 Screening of Staff and Visitors guidance](#). We recommend that workers take their own temperature at home and report to the person in charge (PIC) and stay home if they are experiencing a fever (100.4°F or higher).
 - Exclude ill food workers for the required time and make sure that they are safe to return to work by following [DOH Employee Health & Decision Strategies guidance](#).
 - Follow current guidelines when responding to reported COVID-19 positive employee including reporting and contact tracing. Close any areas where an employee with probable or confirmed COVID-19 worked, touched surfaces, etc. until the area and equipment is cleaned and disinfected. Follow the [cleaning guidelines](#) set by the CDC to deep clean and disinfect.
- Stock handwashing sinks and retrain staff on proper handwashing times and procedures.
- Increase utensil washing frequency, handwashing, or use disposable gloves when tools are shared.
- The Governor issued [Proclamation 20-46.1](#) that requires employers to offer [high-risk](#) employees, as defined by the CDC, alternative work assignments, including telework, alternative, or remote work locations, and if an alternative assignment is not feasible, retain the position of the high risk worker. The proclamation expires August 1, 2020, unless otherwise extended.

Recommendations

- Provide hand gel with at least 60% alcohol, when available.

- Reconfigure employee break times and locations to reduce close contact exposure.

Employee Training

- Train the PIC in the language they understand best to:
 - Monitor employee status for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) prior to each shift, in addition to the employee health requirements in the Food Code.
 - Enforce the food establishment's COVID-19 specific written procedures.
- Train workers in the language they understand best on:
 - Identifying symptoms of COVID illness, how to prevent transmission, required hand hygiene, and illness reporting requirements. Reinforce general employee health and safety. For additional information see [Basic Employee Training on COVID-19 Infection Prevention](#) from Washington State Department of Labor & Industries.
 - Cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting properly.
 - Implementing the COVID-19 specific written procedures including physical distancing and other needed changes.

Employee Physical Distancing

- Ensure 6 foot separation is maintained between customers and staff except for unavoidable, short-term exposures such as when taking orders, collecting payments and/or exchanging goods.
- Minimize staff or customer interactions in narrow or enclosed areas, use barriers, stagger breaks and work shift starts when strict physical distancing is not feasible for a specific task.
- Phase 2 & 3: Minimize the number of staff serving a given table. Have one staff person take a table's order, bring all of their beverages/food/utensils, take their payment, etc.

Recommendations

- Barriers should be a smooth, rigid surface that is easily cleanable and of sufficient height to provide adequate protection from coughs and sneezes.

Employee Safety & PPE

- Limit the sharing of objects and discourage touching of shared surfaces; or when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched areas, wear gloves; use alcohol-based hand gel or wash hands before and after contact.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields, and face masks as appropriate or required to employees for the activity being performed.
- Provide cloth facial coverings for every employee not working alone, unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under Department of Labor & Industries safety and health rules and guidance. To clarify the requirements, the Department of Labor & Industries has developed "[Which Mask for Which Task](#)" and "[eTool Selection](#)"

[Guide](#)” to help employers determine proper selection and use of face coverings and respirators. The department also released an [FAQ Page](#) to respond to common questions about masks, including options for reasonable accommodation for workers with a medical exemption.

- Face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use or when damaged or soiled, may not be shared, and must be properly stored or discarded.
- Employees with medical or disability issues preventing mask use may provide their medical professional's accommodation statement specifying that facial covering or masks should not be worn due to their condition to their employer for consideration of an accommodation.

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

A person's race/ethnicity or nationality does not, itself, put them at greater risk of COVID-19. However, data are revealing that communities of color are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19- this is due to the effects of racism, and in particular, structural racism, that leaves some groups with fewer opportunities to protect themselves and their communities. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions about COVID-19? Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. (Open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact your health care provider.

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 ([Washington Relay](#)) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.