

Public Health Guidance for Facility Owners, Operators and Food Handlers

This document should be used to support operators in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among guests and workers in food facilities. Operators should also refer to the Alberta Biz Connect Guidance documents - Workplace Guidance for Business Owners and Guidance for Restaurants. These documents are available at <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>. Operators should also continue to follow the Alberta Food Regulation and Food Retail and Foodservices Code. Contact your local Environmental Public Health Officer with ISC – First Nations and Inuit Health Branch for more information.

How coronavirus spreads

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze
- close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

Symptoms include, fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, stuffy nose, painful swallowing, headache, chills, muscles aches, fatigue, gastrointestinal symptoms, loss of sense of smell or taste, and conjunctivitis. More serious symptoms, include but are not limited to, difficulty breathing, severe chest pain and confusion.

COVID-19 symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus and in extreme cases can result in death, in particular those that are vulnerable due to old age and, or existing illness.

Is Coronavirus spread through food?

There is currently no evidence to suggest that food is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus. Scientists and food safety authorities across the world are closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19.

Studies suggest that coronaviruses may persist on surfaces for a few hours up to several days, depending on the type of surface and other factors. **Proper cleaning and sanitation** practices will minimize the risk of contamination where food is being prepared.

Handwashing is important in preventing contamination of food by food handlers. Harmful bacteria and viruses that could be present on the hands of food handlers are removed by proper handwashing.

Limit access to restaurants and food facilities

- A **notice** should be posted at the front of the food facility informing individuals who have symptoms, to refrain from entering the facility.
- Encourage **physical distancing** of at least 2 arms-length (approximately 2 metres) from others. Staff who cannot maintain physical distance should wear a cloth/surgical mask.
- If possible, **reduce the number of people working** at a time



- Provide **hand sanitizers** (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance of the facility, and by the cash counter
- If eat-in in the facility is permitted, limit to a 50% of normal capacity and arrange tables to maintain a 2-metre distance between parties; no party should be greater than 6 individuals.

All employees must observe the following:

1. Ensure a physical distancing of at least 2 metres for all customers entering the facility (markers may be placed on the floor to direct customers).
2. Maintain hygiene practices by washing hands often with soap and water, or hand sanitizer (with at least a 60% alcohol) when necessary, especially if handling money.
3. **No self-service is permitted of foods/utensils.** These should be placed behind the counter, and employees must provide these goods to customers.
4. Ensure safe food handling practices by employees when preparing foods, making sure foods are kept at recommended temperatures.
5. For takeout provide all food in individually wrapped portions, including condiments and utensils
 - a. Discourage use of re-usable bags/containers/mugs from the customer, and serve customers in facility packaging. If a customer chooses to use their own containers, they can do so after being served
6. Clean and disinfect high contact surfaces and surrounding areas often, and especially after each customer is served. If necessary, have dedicated staff to clean and sanitize

Support good sanitation and hygiene practices inside restaurants and food facilities

Food facility owners/operators must:

- Advise all staff on self-assessment, symptom reporting and staying home if they are exhibiting any signs of illness. Please refer to the AHS self-assessment tool:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17058.aspx>
- Ensure owners, operators, and facility employees practice **good personal hygiene** (see section A)
- Ensure that food handlers are properly trained in **good food safety practices** (see section B)
- Ensure staff are trained in and following **proper cleaning and sanitizing procedures** (Section C)
- Ensure necessary cleaning supplies are available
- Remove shared condiments and use single-use condiments such as salt, pepper, sauces.
- If possible, discard menus after each use. If not, disinfect the menus carefully
- Encourage frequent hand washing of soap and water, or use of hand sanitizer for customers by placing posters at entrance of facility and around eating area

Cleaning supplies checklist that owners/operators should ensure are available:

- Disposable gloves
- Hand sanitizer (minimum 60% alcohol)
- Liquid Handwashing soap
- Disinfectant/Sanitizer solution
- Sanitizer spray bottle
- Clean cloths
- Brooms
- Mops
- Buckets
- Garbage bags
- Commercial dishwasher detergent
- Bathroom cleaners (toilet brush)
- Paper supplies - toilet paper, napkins, paper towels

A. Good personal hygiene

Owners, operators, and facility employees must:

- Practice good hygiene when handling food by washing hands frequently with liquid soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds:
 - Before starting to work
 - When changing tasks
 - After using the washroom, or changing a diaper
 - After eating, drinking or smoking
 - After handling or disposing of waste/garbage
 - After touching animals
 - After handling money or other forms of payment
 - If there is no soap¹, use hand sanitizer that has a 60% alcohol content and above
- Always cough or sneeze into your bent elbow or a tissue, dispose of the tissue immediately after and then wash your hands
- Avoid touching the face, eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands
- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2m or more
- Post signs for food handlers, and other employees, and customers and others **that encourage frequent handwashing with soap and water** at workplace entrances, washrooms/restrooms, common/recreation/waiting areas, near sinks - kitchens

B. Proper food hygiene practices

In addition, **food handlers** must:

- wash hands before and after handling, or preparing food – especially raw food.
- avoid direct handling of food whenever possible. Use spoons, fork or tongs, napkins, or other dispensing equipment
- keep sanitizing solution on hand (mixed to proper strengths) in a labeled spray bottle or bucket for use on equipment and food contact surfaces

If a food handler chooses to wear disposable gloves when handling food, the gloves must be changed frequently and discarded each time after handling food; ensure that hands are washed between glove changes.

Gloves are **not** a replacement for handwashing.

C. Cleaning and sanitizing procedures

Cleaning and sanitizing **equipment, objects and surfaces** properly reduces the chances for spread of illness and disease. Surfaces that look clean may still have germs on them that you can't see. Sanitizing is performed after cleaning to reduce these germs to safer levels.

As a general rule, **everything that has had direct contact with food** needs to be cleaned and sanitized, as is normally done for standard practice in food facilities.

Simple steps to cleaning and sanitizing

1. Clean the surface
2. Rinse the surface
3. Sanitize the surface

May 29, 2020

4. Allow the surface to air-dry

All food-contact surfaces should be washed, rinsed and sanitized on a frequent basis:

- After each use.
- Before food handlers start working with a different type of food
- Any time food handlers are interrupted during a task and the items being used may have been contaminated
- After four hours if items are in constant use
- If using cloths, separate cloths that are used in customer area (dining/cafeteria) and in food preparation area

Ensure proper cleaning and sanitizing of:

- Utensils (using a 3-compartment sink or commercial dishwasher)
- Kitchen equipment
- Food contact surfaces

Use a sanitizing solution to sanitize food contact surfaces and kitchen equipment as well as the sanitizing sink in the 3-compartment sink that is used for utensils, plates, dishes cups and glasses. Follow the manufacturer's concentration directions when using a sanitizing solution.

Procedure for washing in a 3-compartment sink:

1. Remove any food from plate of dishes by scraping and rinsing
2. **In sink 1**: wash dishes using hot soapy water for utensils and pots, making sure all food and grease are removed.
3. **In sink 2**: rinse with clean hot water (at least 45°C) to remove soap suds
4. **In sink 3**: sanitize by submerging dishes, utensils and pots in either a:
 - a. **Chemical method**: minimum temperature of 45°C for at least 2 minutes in a chlorine solution, or
 - b. **Non-chemical method**: for a minimum of 2 minutes in clean water at a minimum temperature of 77°C
5. Allow to air-dry on a rack

Sanitizing solution:

Dishware and utensils shall be sanitized through the use of:

- clean water at a temperature of at least 77° Celsius, or more, for at least 2 minutes; or
- a clean chlorine solution using 0.5 to 1 teaspoon (2-5ml) household bleach in 1L of water at a temperature not lower than 45° Celsius for at least 2 minutes. For quaternary ammonium, compounds or Iodine (iodophor compounds), refer to manufacturer's directions.

D. Disinfecting surfaces

Current evidence suggests that COVID-19 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of materials. As a precaution, good cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is the best measure of practice in the prevention of COVID-19.

Disinfection products are **slightly stronger than sanitizing solutions**, and are effective in killing germs and viruses. Disinfecting should be used for frequently touched surfaces (**non-**

food contact surfaces).

Surfaces must be properly cleaned prior to disinfecting.

Disinfectant solution:

- Commercial **disinfectant** that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a virucidal claim (removes 99.9 % of viruses, bacteria). Follow the instructions on the label; **or**
- Bleach water solution: combine 20 ml (4 teaspoons) of unscented, household bleach with 1000 ml (4 cups) water. Ensure the surface remains wet with the bleach water solution for 1 minute. Prepare new solution daily.
- **Alternatively**, a combined cleaner/disinfectant product could be used. Please always read the label to verify claims.

When using a disinfectant:

1. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - a. Avoid direct contact with body fluids. If body fluids are present (nose/mouth excretions, blood, vomit, diarrhea, etc.) put on disposable gloves and use paper towels to absorb prior to cleaning.
 - b. Clean visibly soiled surfaces with detergent/cleaner. Use only disposable cloths (paper towels or wipes).
2. Clean all frequently touched surfaces
3. Place used paper towels in garbage bin.
4. Apply disinfectant to the surface as per manufacturers' instructions. Surface should be moist. Allow to air dry.
5. Remove gloves, and dispose of them
6. Dispose of waste daily according to food facility waste disposal procedures.
7. Clean hands, washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or higher) if water is not available

Frequently touched surfaces

- Bar counters
- Cash register/debit machine
- Computer/tablet²
- Doors/ knobs/handles
- Light switches
- Light switches
- Tables
- Chairs/booths
- Kitchen counters
- Service stations
- Freezer/refrigerator handles
- Sinks/faucets/toilet handles
- Soap dispenser
- Baby changing stations
- Soap dispensers

Notes

¹ Food facility operators must always provide liquid soap for food handlers, however, for employees that do not routinely handle food, a hand sanitizer may be used (refer to provincial regulations)

² For screens of computers/tablets/cell phones, use a 70% isopropyl alcohol wipe or Clorox disinfecting wipes to gently wipe around the surface and screen. Avoid getting any moisture in any opening.