

# Guidelines for restaurants and other food businesses: Minimizing the spread of COVID-19

May 15, 2020

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Governor Jay Inslee issued a [“Stay Home - Stay Healthy” order](#) in Washington state on March 23, 2020. The order will last for a minimum of two weeks. The order requires every Washingtonian to stay at home, except for specific situations. The exceptions include people going to work at an [essential business](#).

While restaurants are designated as an essential business, they are only allowed to stay open for carry-out and quick serve food operations – including food preparation, carry-out and delivery food. Food businesses can play an important role in both protecting their employees and customers from COVID-19 by following the recommended personal and environmental hygiene practices described below.

- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- **Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water** for 20 seconds upon first arriving to work, after using the restroom, before and after eating and frequently throughout the day. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Provide alcohol based (60%) hand sanitizers** for use for both employees and customers by placing them at convenient/accessible locations.
- Use sanitizing solution (i.e., one teaspoon of unscented household bleach in a gallon of cool water) to **frequently sanitize commonly touched surfaces and objects** such as electronics, door knobs, faucet handles, counter tops, cash machine key pads, dining tables frequently throughout the day. Change the sanitizing solution at least once every four hours.
- **Stop self-serve style operations**, including salad bars, buffets and dispensers.
- **Implement social distancing** by ensuring employees and customers maintain social distancing of at least 6ft and reduce duration of close contacts.
- **Ensure dishwasher and/or three –compartment sinks are used properly and have the appropriate level of sanitizer** for final rinse (50-100 PPM chlorine based sanitizer, follow product label for other approved sanitizers).
- **Ensure sneeze guards are in place** where required.
- If you have food employees at higher risk for coronavirus with underlying health conditions, such as people 60 or older, people with underlying health conditions (heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes) or those with weakened immune systems or those who are pregnant: **consider temporarily assigning employees with underlying health conditions to non-public-contact duties.**

If you are a food business owner or a food worker and have questions related to your operation please reach out to your Health Investigator or call 206-263-9566 to speak with office staff. For more detailed information, visit the WA Department of Health’s [Food Worker and Establishment Guidance on COVID-19](#).