

# CORONAVIRUS

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

updated 4/13/20

### What is COVID-19 Coronavirus?

Coronavirus is a respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China, and believed to have initially spread from animals to humans but now is spreading from person-to-person contact. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it's unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people. Typically, respiratory viruses are most contagious when an individual is most symptomatic, but there have been reports of the virus spreading when the affected individual does not show any symptoms.

## HOW IT SPREADS / SYMPTOMS

### COVID-19 Coronavirus Spreads:

- The virus primarily spreads via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person sneezes or coughs.
- It spreads between people who are in close contact (within about 6 feet).

### Symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days to as long as 14 days after exposure:

- Fever, cough and/or shortness of breath

For people who are ill with COVID-19, please follow CDC guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/steps-when-sick.html>

## PREVENTION

### Currently there is no vaccine for COVID-19. The best measure is to avoid coming in contact with the virus:

- [Wash hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer that contains 60-95% alcohol when water and soap are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if sick.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) objects and surfaces that have been touched (counters, doorknobs, toilets, phones, etc.).
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with a tissue, then immediately dispose of the tissue and [wash hands](#) for at least 20 seconds..
- It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.
- With its new determination, the CDC says it is a very good practice to wear a mask if you're in public and/or working. See FAQs for more info. [Source](#).

## MONITORING

### Keeping Employees Safe: What to do if an employee shows flu-like symptoms

- It is highly recommended that any employees who are showing flu-like symptoms should be excluded from the operation until they are symptom free.

### Keeping Customer Safe: What to do if a customer shows flu like symptoms in the restaurant

According to the CDC, the spread of COVID-19 occurs when people are in close contact (less than 6 feet) with an infected person. Some basic steps that could be taken are:

- Provide the customer with additional napkins or tissues to use when they cough or sneeze
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers to use
- Be sure to clean and sanitize any objects or surfaces that may have been touched

### Bodily Fluid Event: What to do if there is a bodily fluid event

If a customer or employee [vomits or has diarrhea](#) it is recommended (AT THIS TIME) that the operations follows protocols that are in place for Norovirus be used

- Ensure the employee who is cleaning up the area is using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Segregate the area that has been contaminated
- Dispose of any food that has been exposed
- Ensure any utensils that might have been exposed are cleaned and sanitized
- Frequently clean and sanitize the area to include the floor, walls and any other objects contaminated by the incident
- Properly dispose any of the equipment that was used to clean up the area

For additional recommendations and resources, please visit [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



# CORONAVIRUS

## Frequently Asked Questions

updated 4/13/20

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## GENERAL QUESTIONS / TRANSMISSION

### Can COVID 19 be transmitted through food?

There is no report from CDC that food is a source of the virus. You should always practice safe food preparation practices to avoid food borne illness as well.

### Is there a projected end date to the outbreak?

There is no known end at this time.

### Can I catch the virus from a package shipped from overseas?

CDC has no report of risk from objects shipped from overseas and, in fact, DHS is still allowing commerce from outside the United States to be received at our ports.

### Can the virus be carried on hair and beards?

Particulate matter coming from coughs and sneezes could remain on any human surface which is why frequent handwashing is desired and if you feel you've had someone cough or sneeze near your face and hair, care should be taken to wash there as well.

### Should I take my ServSafe exam again?

It isn't necessary to retest but if you're unsure of daily food safety processes you can purchase the course online and skip the exam. The course can be a good refresher as it is developed according to the most current edition of the Food Code. A link is provided on the resource page.

### Should we travel to conferences or do teleconferences instead?

In its most recent guidance CDC has suggested to be wary of and avoid close contact, especially if you fall into one of the high-risk groups. However in their Sunday release the CDC specifically called out cruise ship travel only and, again, the focus was on people with underlying health issues. Links to that report can be found on our resource page.

### What would be your ABC/123 priority attack?

1. Revisit employee health policies. Make sure they are in place and communicated clearly and they are in compliance with the federal food code and local health department regulations.
2. Address high touch surfaces within your facility where patrons' hands may hit the most.
3. Look at your operating procedures for sanitizing and disinfecting. Make sure workers responsible have proper training, proper equipment, and proper solutions according to EPA's registry of disinfectants.

### How should we handle negative media about visiting restaurants?

As a restaurateur your goal is to provide a good and safe dining experience for your guests. Reassuring them that your team is prepared and trained and that your facility is clean and sanitary is the best communication against negative media. Let your happy guests be part of your communication plan.

### What about business continuity plans from a food supply standpoint?

You should be in contact with all of your suppliers to seek input into supply chain interruptions. While commerce into the United States is open it does not mean that the supply chains are able to meet demand. From food ingredients to paper goods, you need to have a good handle on availability and a plan for interruption. Your continuity plan can include isolation but it is a business decision based on your needs.

## EMPLOYEES

**Is there a protocol in the event an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19 or thinks they have it?**

An employer never has to allow a sick employee to remain at work. Procedures should already be in place to handle sending people home if the employer is checking temperatures and a fever is identified. The procedures must be uniformly applied. Also, the CDC states that employees who become ill with symptoms of influenza-like illness at work during a pandemic should leave the workplace. The EEOC has stated that advising such workers to go home is not a disability-related action if the illness is akin to seasonal influenza or the 2009 spring/summer H1N1 virus. Additionally, the EEOC has stated that such actions would be permitted under the ADA if the illness were serious enough to pose a direct threat.

**Can we take an employee's temperature as they report for work?**

Generally, measuring an employee's body temperature is a medical examination. However, the EEOC stated on March 18, 2020, that because the CDC and state/local health authorities have acknowledged community spread of COVID-19 and issued attendant precautions, employers may, during this emergency, legally require the measuring of employees' body temperature. Still, employers need to be aware that some people with COVID-19 do not have a fever. If you decide to establish such a policy, consider contacting your insurance carrier for suggestion and retain a contract nurse for the task. Alternatively, perform the task with an employee in a supervisory capacity who will maintain confidentiality of the results to the maximum extent possible. Also, employees waiting to be screened should still be at least six feet apart in line.

**What if an employee refused to come to work for fear of infection?**

Your policies, that have been clearly communicated, should address this. Educating your workforce is a critical part of your responsibility.

**What if employees have used all of their sick leave?**

Again, policies need to address attendance. Once again, local and state regulations may address what you have to do and you should be aligned with those rules.

**What if an employee refuses to serve someone who appears sick?**

Your policies and procedures should be your guide as they would under normal circumstances with a sick guest.

**Should I report that I have had a sick employee or guest to the health department?**

Yes, the health department will want to trace both employee and guest contacts. The CDC advises that you should provide instructions to employees/guests on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus.

**What if the health department doesn't respond? Do we self-disclose?**

If they don't respond, try again. Presuming that the department is local, you should connect to your state health department. Self-closing is a business decision that should be part of an overall continuity plan you have for your business. Ideally if you have a sick employee, like you would under normal circumstances, you would conduct a thorough cleaning and sanitizing of both front and back of the house.

**If we think a guest is sick what do we do?**

Suggest tissues, hand sanitizer, and notify the health department. They will want to trace the individual's contact history. If there is a guest you think is sick, that should kick in your enhanced cleaning and sanitizing practices. Be sure to thoroughly disinfect menus, tables, and anything they may have touched.

**If an immediate family member has been diagnosed with COVID-19, should the employee not come to work?**

This is a place to connect with your local health department. Confirm their information on community exposure and risks of transmission. The CDC suggests isolation for people who have contracted the virus.

**What if a delivery driver looks sick, are there protocols?**

You should turn the driver away, suggest they see a doctor and notify the delivery company immediately.



## MASKS

### What is the CDC saying with this new guidance?

As COVID-19 testing has increased, the medical community has determined that there is a large population who are infected with COVID-19 who are asymptomatic (showing no outward signs of the virus). However, because they have the virus, they can still infect others in close contact through something as simple as breathing.

### Am I required to wear a mask?

On April 3rd, the CDC updated their guidance to recommend the use of simple cloth face coverings that cover the nose and mouth to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost can be used at restaurants as an additional voluntary public health measure.

Employers may require the use of such face coverings relying on the CDC guidance (unless there is an accommodation request which should be addressed on a case by case basis). Some local jurisdictions, such as the County of San Diego, California, and the City of Laredo, Texas, are already requiring restaurant employees to cover their nose and mouth with a mask or another form of cloth face covering. In jurisdictions where it is required, restaurants that wish to remain open must ensure the use of the mandated face coverings by its employees. Please note that the cloth face coverings and masks recommended for restaurant workers are not the same as surgical masks or N-95 respirators. The CDC does not recommend surgical masks or N-95 respirators be used at restaurants as those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.

### I thought masks were only for medical practitioners.

This new guidance continues to emphasize the importance of saving surgical and N95 masks for medical personnel and first responders. Instead the suggestion is to use any kind of cloth covering for your face that covers your nose and mouth. There are a growing number of suppliers of cloth masks but even a scarf covering the face and nose is effective.

### So if I wear a mask, can I go to work?

It would be a great practice for any restaurant worker now to wear some kind of face covering while working, especially considering the risk of having the virus but being asymptomatic. If you don't feel well and especially if you show any signs of virus (fever, cough, sneeze) GO TO THE DOCTOR. It could be COVID-19 but it is still cold and flu season and food workers should never report to work when sick. At the same time, if you feel well, wearing the mask doesn't offset the importance of social distancing at work as well as continuing enhanced sanitation efforts using EPA approved sanitation products as well as frequent washing of hands.

### But if I am wearing a mask, does that mean I still have to wash my hands as often?

YES! The virus still exists on surfaces, and it is easily transmitted hand to face. Remember, touching your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes is one of the easiest ways to catch the virus. Frequent hand washing after touching surfaces is added safety for you and those around you.

### What if my employer doesn't provide a mask?

You should be concerned about your health and those around you. Remember, this new guidance is designed to keep others who may have the virus from spreading it. Finding any kind of covering for the nose and mouth and bringing it to wear to work will be effective in reducing the risk of you sharing the virus if you have it.

## CLEANING / SANITIZING

### **How long can the virus live on a solid surface?**

Health officials have not made that determination yet. Other respiratory viruses similar to COVID-19 can live anywhere from hours up to multiple days. CDC recommends that if a facility has a known case of COVID-19 in their restaurant they should close that area off and wait as long as practical to begin cleaning and disinfecting.

### **Are there specific conditions within a restaurant that help COVID-19 spread more rapidly?**

We should be managing our restaurants and facilities in the same ways we would against influenza. The best thing to consider is how you manage your high-touch surfaces (tables, condiments, menus, restrooms, etc.) and ensure you have good standard operating procedures in place for cleaning and sanitizing.

### **Should we shut down self-serve areas and salad bars?**

It's very difficult to make a recommendation to shut down a self-service area. It's possible to manage these area with vigilant cleaning and sanitizing procedures. There is no magic bullet answer to questions like this.

Also, think about promoting hand hygiene, hand sanitizers, handwashing procedures to patrons prior to use of these common utensils.

### **Is there a known heat temperature that would kill the virus, for example does it die in a heat sanitizing dish machine?**

CDC has not reports of heat alone killing the virus which is why they are recommending strong and effective sanitizing and disinfecting processes.

### **What about disinfectants and sanitizers?**

Last week the EPA published a list of effective disinfectants. A link to that page can be found on [our resource page](#). Also check with your supplier to be sure any disinfectant you buy is on the list and is effective. The CDC page also has suggestions for compounds to sanitize and, again, those CDC links can be found on the resource page. Make sure you are using these specific products and compounds.

Do NOT try to find something similar to these chemicals and creating your own mixtures. Beyond not being effective, these mixtures can lead to illness or death.

### **How often should we change the wet cloth used to wipe down tables to prevent spread of the virus?**

We should not be using wet cloths with just water. Wet cloths without sanitizer will just spread the virus around tables and menus. Refer to EPA list of approved disinfectants. Change cloths as often as the water gets dirty.

### **All of my vendors and local stores are out of hand sanitizers and wipes. What should we use instead?**

Handwashing on its own with soap is an effective measure for removing this virus. Having a handwashing or double handwashing approach, using nail brushes, uses one-use towels are all good procedures to implement. You may want to urge patrons to use the restroom to wash their hands.