COVID-19 Guidelines for Reopening your Restaurant

This guide provides you with the information you need to reopen your restaurant, or other food premise, after being closed or limited to take-out and delivery only. Part 1 provides advice on preparing your restaurant for food service, and Part 2 helps you to modify your premises and practices to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. This guidance is not intended to supersede the restrictions in place by the Government of Ontario.

The provincial government has announced that on June 12, 2020, restaurants, bars, food trucks and other food and drink establishments (e.g., wineries, breweries and distilleries) can open for dining in outdoor areas only, such as patios, curbside, parking lots and adjacent premises. Therefore, dine in services are not permitted when indoors at a food premises.

Please note that announcement may contain conditions, which may result in amendments to Part 2 of this document. Please check the Ottawa Public Health website at OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus for updates and new information.

What is COVID-19?

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is known to cause infection in the respiratory system. COVID-19 spreads from person-to-person through direct contact or over short distances by droplets through coughing or sneezing. A person may also get COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly eyes. COVID-19 may have classic symptoms such as feeling feverish, new or worsening cough, pneumonia, and/or difficulty breathing. Other symptoms of COVID-19 can include: sore throat, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, runny nose or nasal congestion, among others. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19, although carriers may also show no symptoms. OPH encourages all organizations and agencies to implement their own internal policies for the protection of staff, volunteers, and clients.
If you think you have COVID-19 symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has it, use the Ontario Government self-assessment tool to help determine how to seek further care.

Support and encourage behaviours to reduce the spread of germs
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Keep a two metre/six feet distance from others, when possible.
- Limit the number of people you come into close contact with.
- Wash your hands often, and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear a face mask or covering when you are in a public setting where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

It is important to recognize that the COVID-19 situation is evolving very quickly. Please refer to OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus to stay up-to-date on the latest information.

Part 1: Food Premises Pre-Opening Checklist

The following are recommended actions to be taken prior to opening your establishment for business:
- Check the condition of all food and discard expired or otherwise unfit products.
- Wash, rinse and sanitize all food contact surfaces.
- Ensure hand washing stations are adequately supplied and functional.
- Clean and disinfect all non-food contact surfaces, including high touch areas such as door handles, touchscreens and equipment knobs.
- Check thoroughly for signs of pest activity. Consider contracting a licenced pest management company prior to opening to ensure there is no infestation.
- Clean, sanitize and ensure all hot and cold holding facilities/equipment are functional.
- Ensure dishwashing machines are functioning adequately.
- Ensure adequate amounts of sanitizers and detergents are available for manual dishwashing.
- Ensure garbage storage areas are clean and of adequate size for the needs.
- Clean and disinfect washrooms, and ensure adequate supplies are available.
- Ensure faucets are working properly and flush pipes for at least five minutes.
- Consider training staff on new procedures/requirements.
Part 2: Guidance for the Reopening of Food Premises

Operators are responsible for providing an environment that minimizes the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Operators should also refer to guidance from the Ministry of Labour. This Ministry guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from OPH about food safety, or the Ontario Food Premises Regulation.

There is no requirement for existing restaurants to be inspected by OPH before reopening. However, if you have a new restaurant, you must contact OPH before opening to arrange for an inspection.

Before Reopening

*Prepare the physical space*

- Rearrange and/or remove seating and tables, or mark as unavailable, to ensure a minimum of two metres/six feet between each edge of every table and to maintain two metres/six feet between patrons of different tables (e.g., maintain two metres between the backs of seating when occupied)
- Consider reservations only.
- Recommend that no more than six customers should be seated at each table.
- Remove waiting area seating and create a process to ensure that customers stay separate and maintain physical distancing while waiting to be seated.
- Use visible floor markers for any areas where a line up may occur.
- Keep chairs well away from high traffic areas if possible.
- Rearrange equipment and/or processes in the kitchen and other areas used by staff so that a two metre/six foot distance is achievable at all times. If not feasible, staff should wear masks or face coverings.
- If necessary, rearrange pick-up by servers to maintain distance (e.g. use the bar as a serving area).
- Where necessary, install barriers (e.g. plexiglass) to protect staff and customers when physical distancing can not be maintained.
- Remove buffets and self-serve locations.
- Reconfigure break rooms/areas and eating areas for staff to physically distance.
- Discourage staff from congregating during lunch and break times, where physical distancing of 2m/6ft cannot be maintained.
• Provide direction to customers:
  o Install directional arrows (e.g. at entrance/exit) if possible.
  o Put up signage for physical distancing, **passive screening**¹, and any policies affecting them.

• The use of non-medical masks or face coverings in all public spaces is strongly encouraged. Operators may require their customers to wear them, except when eating.

**Develop Protocols**

• Policies for customers: for example, reservations preferred/only; payment by card preferred/only.

• Menus: single-use paper, online for customers' mobile devices, menu-boards, chalkboards, or regular menus cleaned and disinfected between uses.

• Tables: do not pre-set tables; utensils should be rolled or packaged.

• Table items: replace regular condiments with single-serve versions, or sanitize between uses, consider disposable napkins, etc., avoid decorative centrepieces.

• Staffing: for example, stagger shifts, stagger breaks and lunch breaks, update absence policies, and new protocols for back filling absences.
  o Note that **active screening**² and not allowing staff to work if showing symptoms of COVID-19 are required policies. Staff must report any symptoms developed during shift immediately to their supervisor.
  o Staff should be aware of COVID-19 precautions, and physically distance as much as possible, including with other staff. Staff congregating can be a high risk for COVID-19 transmission.

• Signage: post signage on **handwashing, physical distancing**, reporting symptoms, and make them visible to staff and customers.

• Cleaning and disinfecting: update protocols for cleaning/disinfecting surfaces and equipment.
  o Give attention to key touch points and objects (e.g. food contact surfaces, hand contact areas, touch screens, door handles, switches, table tops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers).
  o Shared equipment such as credit card machines and cash registers.
  o Consider installing devices such as automatic doors and lights, electronic taps, etc.

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¹ Passive screening: Customers screen themselves by following steps described on a poster
² Active Screening: Staff are screened by someone prompting them with questions, or actively completing a questionnaire
o Specify and obtain approved hard-surface cleaning materials.

- Thoroughly clean and disinfect the premises before opening.
- More details on cleaning and disinfection are available at Public Health Ontario’s Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings.

- Supply dispensers for hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) to staff and customers, including at the door.

- Minimise unnecessary contact between customers and staff (e.g. place clearly visible numbers on tables and ask customers to seat themselves).

- Minimise the time staff spend within two metres/six feet of customers.

**Train Staff**

- Train staff on how best to serve food, maintain safe physical distancing and avoid unnecessary handling (e.g. serve to front of table and let customers distribute, avoid handling coffee cups when refilling, let customer fill/pack leftovers in containers).

- Install directional arrows to direct employees and minimize direct contact.

- Practice physical distancing during breaks.

- Assign staff to specific tasks and minimize contact between them.

- Ensure staff have access to gloves and masks as needed.
  - Train staff in proper use of gloves and masks. Gloves are not essential, but, if used, must be changed frequently and hands washed between uses.

- Encourage frequent handwashing using the correct technique, and to avoid touching face.

- Keep an up to date staff log of when and where staff worked, with contact information, in case it is required for contact tracing by public health.

**During Active Operation**

As of June 12, 2020, opening is currently restricted to dining in outdoor areas only, such as patios, curbside, parking lots and adjacent premises. At this time, dining inside is not permitted.

- The owner/operator, or another person appointed for that purpose, should be present and checking to ensure adherence to protocols.

- Screening staff for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in a food premises is critical. All measures must be taken to ensure staff are well before interacting with customers and colleagues. Ensure that active screening of each employee occurs before each shift.
Do not allow staff members who are sick to come to work. If staff are sick they should go home and stay at home. They should also be advised to complete the COVID-19 self-assessment tool, contact their primary health provider and/or get tested.

- Ensure customers are physically distancing while waiting; have them wait outdoors and, ensure that they do not enter the dining space on the patio. Customers who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should be refused entry. Display posters telling customers that if they have symptoms, they cannot enter.
- All customers must be seated; service to standing customers (e.g. in bar areas) is prohibited.
- Make sure that tables are cleaned and sanitized at least daily and between sittings.
- Maintain cleaning and sanitation logs.
- Consider opening doors and/or windows to increase ventilation for any indoor operations.
- No dancing or singing may be permitted in the outdoor dining areas.
- Ottawa Public Health is recommending that restaurants not permit live musical events or performances that include singing. This recommendation is based on reports of “super spreading” events where one individual infected many other individuals who were further than 2 metres apart in the context of singing. Other considerations for live performances are listed below.

  In addition, restaurants that play recorded music should decrease the volume of the music, as loud music may cause diners to lean towards each other and raise their voices or shout. Shouting may increase the distance that potentially infected respiratory droplets could travel beyond 2 metres placing other patrons in the restaurant at increased risk of COVID-19 exposure.

  - Live performances of music must ensure:
    - Outdoor only
    - No singing, vocalizations, or shouting (conversational volume talking is ok)
    - No wind instruments (instruments that involve human breathing)
    - Musicians must be at least 2 metres apart from each other and from the audience
    - If amplification used, keep volume low so patrons do not have to raise voices or lean towards each other when talking to each other.
Patios
The rules for distancing, service, and cleaning and sanitation that apply to the indoor area of the food premise also apply to patios.

- OPH is making the following recommendations for patio coverings, recognizing that there is limited evidence to guide specific recommendations:
  - Restaurants may install patio coverings such as canopies, tents, awnings, and umbrellas, but these coverings should meet the following conditions:
    - The patio must remain fully open to the air on at least three sides to allow for adequate air circulation.
    - The covering should be as high as possible from the ground – a height of 3 metres is recommended as a minimum.
    - Ideally, the patio covering would be retractable or collapsible to increase air flow.
  - Rearrange and/or remove seating and tables, or mark as unavailable, to ensure a minimum of two metres/six feet between each edge of every table and to maintain two metres/six feet between patrons of different tables (e.g., maintain two metres between the backs of seating when occupied).
    - Patrons of one table must be seated two metres/six feet from patrons of other tables.
    - Co-mingling between patrons of different groups should be avoided.
- Limit the time servers spend within two metres/six feet of customers.
- Allow space for the safe circulation of customers and staff.
- Consider a reservation system to avoid lines of waiting customers.
- Ensure that lines of waiting customers do not come close to patio customers.
- Use visible markers on the floor (e.g. stickers) where a line-up may occur.
- Mark direction of travel to designate entrances and exits, pick up areas and washrooms.
- Post signage promoting physical distancing upon entry.
- Provide one or more means of egress.
- Access to indoor facilities is limited to patio/outdoor dining area access, food pickup, payment, washrooms or other health and safety purposes.
Download and Print Signage for your Restaurant

- Physical distancing
- Stop the spread of germs
- Mask or face covering
- Employee Screening Questionnaire
- Customer Passive Screening
- Signage

Additional Resources

- Province of Ontario Restaurant and food services health and safety during COVID-19
- Province of Ontario Guidance on Health and Safety for Restaurant Servers, Cooks and Dishwashers during COVID-19

More information

For more information, visit our website OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus, or call us at 613-580-6744.