

# Restaurants, cafés, and pubs: Protocols for returning to operation

The following content was posted to WorkSafeBC's website on May 22, 2020. For the most current version, please visit [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

These protocols are for employers in restaurants, cafés, and bars, as well as any other employer who sells food and drink on their premises. These employers with concession stands should also refer to guidance provided for [food and drink services](#), and may also benefit from reviewing other protocols if includes other work environments such as [office space](#), or [retail services](#). Employers must also ensure they are abiding by any [orders, notices, or guidance issued by the provincial health officer](#), and the appropriate health authority, which are relevant to their workplace.

## Developing a COVID-19 safety plan

Employers are required to develop a [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#) that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This plan follows the six steps outlined on [COVID-19 and returning to safe operation](#). Employers must involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace. You do not need a formal plan in place to begin operation, but are expected to develop it while protecting the safety of your workers.

Employers are not required to submit plans to WorkSafeBC for approval, but in accordance with the order of the [Provincial Health Officer](#), this plan **must be posted** at the worksite. During a WorkSafeBC inspection, we will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers or to see the plan if it has been developed.

One part of developing your COVID-19 Safety Plan is identifying protocols that everyone at the workplace must follow to keep workers safe. We've provided industry-specific protocols below to consider as you develop the plan for your workplace.

These protocols are not a list of requirements; however, they should be considered and implemented to the extent that they address the risks your workplace. You may need to identify and implement additional protocols if the protocols suggested here do not sufficiently address the risk to your workers.

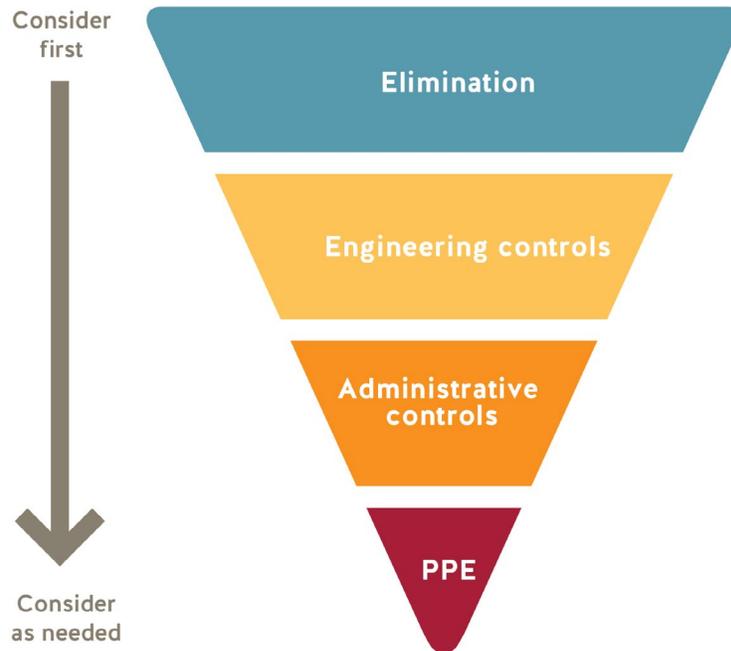
## Understanding the risk

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

- The risk of person-to-person transmission is increased the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.
- The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices help mitigate this risk.

## Selecting protocols for your workplace

Note that different protocols offer different protection. Wherever possible, use the protocols that offer the highest level of protection and add additional protocols as required.



**First level protection (elimination):** Use policies and procedures to keep people at a safe physical distance from one another. Limit the number of people in your workplace at any one time, and implement protocols to keep workers at least 2 metres from other workers, customers, and members of the public.

**Second level protection (engineering controls):** If you can't always maintain physical distancing, install **barriers** such as plexiglass to separate people.

**Third level protection (administrative controls):** Establish rules and guidelines, such as cleaning protocols, telling workers to not share tools, or implementing one-way doors or walkways.

**Fourth level protection (PPE):** If the first three levels of protection aren't enough to control the risk, consider the use of **non-medical masks**. Be aware of the limitation of non-medical masks to protect the wearer from respiratory droplets. Ensure workers are **using masks appropriately**.

## Protocols for restaurants, cafés, and pubs

**Note: These guidelines pertain largely to employee health and safety. Employers should also refer to guidance issued from the provincial health officer, and the appropriate health authority, on public safety.**

On May 15, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer issued an order that places where meals and drinks, including drinks containing liquor, are prepared and served must not exceed 50 percent of their usual capacity of patrons at one time.

This order also restricts tables to parties of six people, and requires 2 metres between patrons sitting at different tables, and between patrons from different parties sitting at a bar or counter.

If the establishment normally collects information from patrons for the purpose of making reservations or seating patrons, employers are also required by this order to retain the contact information for one member of every party of patrons for 30 days in the event that there is a need for contact tracing on the part of the medical health officer.

Employers are advised to remain apprised of orders issued by the Provincial Health Officer as this information may change.

### General considerations

- Consider work activities that could be done remotely (e.g., dispatch, customer service, administration) and change work model accordingly.
- Modify or eliminate in-person meetings and morning huddles; when in-person meetings are required, hold them outside where the risk of transmission is lower.
- Eliminate hand-to-hand contact with customers (handshakes, fist bumps, high-fives, etc.).
- Rearrange waiting areas – consider things like removing chairs and benches, asking guests to wait outside for a table, posting signs, stanchions, tape on floor, etc.
- Create separate take-out and dine-in protocols. Create a door or path separate from dine-in customers for payment and/or pickup if possible. Introduce clear signage for take-out versus dine-in and in and out doors.
- Consider having customers seat themselves by displaying table numbers. Have a greeter behind plexiglass assign tables.
- Maintain a 2 metre distance from other workers and guests. If work activities mean that physical distancing cannot be maintained at all times, employers may consider the use of masks as an additional measure. Refer to WorkSafeBC's guidance on [the selection and use of masks](#).
- Provide hand sanitizer at the door for customers to use when they enter the restaurant.
- Consider adding a plexiglass barrier at the bar and payment areas.
- Create and maintain a protocol for accessing and using washroom facilities where a 2 metre or 6 feet separation cannot be maintained.
- Manage break times and schedules (stagger) to support maintaining physical distances between people.
- Support workers with medical resource information that includes telephone numbers and website addresses for key medical, mental health, and bullying resources, and approved sources for COVID-19 information.

- Ensure workers have a health and safety contact person available for every shift (joint occupational safety and health committee member, representative, or otherwise) to support that protocols are being followed and understood.
- Encourage key drop deliveries to reduce contact between delivery workers and front-of-house workers.

### Table service

- Have guests pour their own water by providing water in a bottle or jug at the table. Or pre-pour water glasses at the bar.
- Remove buffets and other self-service amenities.
- Have servers leave food and drinks at the front of the table and let guests pass them after the server has stepped away.
- Remove one chair per table and use that space as a designated place for the server to come to the table, similar to the open side on a booth. This ensures that workers don't have to squeeze in between customers.
- Remove salt and pepper shakers, sauce dispensers, candles, and other table top items. Provide if requested and replace with thoroughly cleaned and sanitized ones. Consider single-use options.
- Avoid touching coffee cups when refilling.
- If customers ask to take unfinished food with them, provide packaging and let the customer put the food into the container.
- Use digital menus boards, large chalkboards, or online pre-ordering alternatives instead of traditional menus. If this is not possible, consider single-use disposable menus.
- Try to limit the use of cash and limit the handling of credit cards and loyalty cards whenever possible, by allowing customers to scan or tap their cards and handle the card readers themselves. Encourage tap payment over pin pad use.
- Staff a person to direct or install floor decals to facilitate the flow of people during busy times.
- Consider turning bars into service or pass through counters. In this scenario, the kitchen teams could deliver dishes to the bar area and the servers pick up from there. This reduces touches and reduces traffic into the kitchen.

### Cleaning and hygiene

- Develop and establish handwashing procedures for all front-of-house staff. WorkSafeBC [handwashing signage](#) is provided to communicate good handwashing practices. Post handwashing signs near all sinks.
- Have sanitizer available to customers and staff. Install additional dispensers as needed.
- Place sanitizer for customers and staff at entrance, after checkout, and throughout the establishment.
- Increase cleaning between seatings. Tables, vinyl or laminated menus, and vinyl/leather/metal seats should be wiped when tables turn. Remove all items when turning a table, for example, unused cutlery, children's colouring paper, and crayons.
- Establish cleaning procedures for condiments and other items brought to the table or available for sharing. Ensure they are cleaned between uses.
- Clarify procedures for cleaning staff areas and train accordingly.
- Clean bathrooms thoroughly and on a more frequent basis. Install additional touch-free soap and paper towel dispensers if possible.

- Enhance cleaning of all frequent touchpoints including walls, tables, chairs, barstools, coasters, condiments, coat hooks, restrooms, doors including front door, restroom door, staff doors to office, kitchen, and breakroom.
- Establish **hygiene practices** that address the needs of the workplace that includes the requirement to wash or sanitize hands after coming into contact with public items.
- Develop a cleaning schedule and assign and train a person who is responsible for completing cleaning tasks and ensuring these tasks are completed.
- Create a process to track what has been cleaned, when, and by whom.

## Kitchen

### Physical distancing

- Establish separations (distancing or physical **barriers** made of non-porous materials like plexiglass) between workspaces in kitchens.
- Limit the number of staff in a food preparation area at any one time. Use similar calculations for maximum number of guests for how many workers can be in the kitchen.
- Consider creating cohorts of workers who work together and who do not interact with other cohorts. This will assist in reducing transmission throughout the workplace in the event that a staff member becomes ill.
- Establish directional arrows on the floor in kitchen settings to control flow of traffic and reduce interaction between cooking and clearing areas.
- When applicable, clearly mark exit and entrance doors from kitchen to service area to avoid interaction between food being served and dishes being cleared.
- Restrict access into the food preparation area by delivery agents and members of the public and other staff. Create a staging area to allow unpacking outside of the kitchen setting. Where possible, perform work outdoors, where transmission risk is lower.
- If it is not possible to maintain physical distance at all times, employers may consider the use of masks as an additional measure. Refer to WorkSafeBC's guidance on the **selection and use of masks**.

### Cleaning and hygiene

- Enhance cleaning and disinfecting practices for high-contact areas such as surfaces in public serving zones; incorporating regular and end-of-shift cleaning and disinfection for all shared spaces; and ensuring workers are provided with appropriate supplies, such as soap and water, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes.
- As much as possible, cooks and chefs should use their own high-use tools such as knives.
- Establish a system to eliminate or minimize sharing of communal equipment and small tools (implements). Any shared equipment such as small appliances, mixers, etc. should be cleaned between use and workers should wash their hands.
- Ingredients and containers that are often shared should be included in your cleaning protocol.
- High touch equipment (freezer doors, oven handles, knobs) should be included in your cleaning protocol.
- Develop and establish additional handwashing procedures for all kitchen staff. This includes before and after leaving the kitchen and using equipment.

## Delivery

### Physical distancing

- Stagger start times for food delivery drivers to prevent crowding at restaurant dispatch locations.
- Drop off packages at the door or outside buildings; call ahead and/or text instructions so the deliverer is aware of any site requirements and the customer can be ready to accept the delivery.
- Adjust practices for proof of delivery so that in-person signatures are avoided and online confirmation of receipt of package can be used instead.

### Cleaning and hygiene

- Ensure shared vehicles are included in your cleaning protocol, including a disinfectant wipe down of all touch points (e.g., door handles, steering wheels, seats, windows, stairs, handrails, elevator buttons, door handles, garbage handles, seats, phones).

### Further resources

The following associations may have additional information, guidance, or resources that may assist you in the development of your plan.

- [British Columbia Restaurant and Food Services Association \(BCRFA\)](#)
- [Restaurants Canada](#)
- [British Columbia Center for Disease Control – Food Businesses](#)
- [Alliance of Beverage Licensees \(ABLE BC\)](#)
- [Go2HR](#)
- [BC's Restart Plan](#)

## For more information

The information on this page is based on current recommendations and may change. For the latest guidance, please see the health information from the [British Columbia Centre for Disease Control](#) and the latest news from the [government of British Columbia](#).

### If you have a question or concern

Workers and employers with questions or concerns about workplace exposure to COVID-19 can call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland (toll-free within B.C. at 1.888.621.SAFE). You'll be able to speak to a prevention officer to get answers to your questions, and if required, a prevention officer will be assigned to assess the health and safety risk at your workplace.

## Resources

### COVID-19: A guide to reducing the risk

This resource is for employers, outlining the steps to follow to make sure you are minimizing the risk of COVID-19 so your business can operate safely.

### COVID-19 Safety Plan

Employers are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. This tool will guide...

### Help prevent the spread of COVID-19: Cover coughs and sneezes

This poster reminds workers and visitors to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze, and to wash their hands afterward.

[See more resources](#)