

The Health Department is closely monitoring the rapid developments in the outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, COVID-19. Everyone has a role in keeping our community healthy, and that includes our business partners in food and lodging establishments. Information is available on the Health Department [website](#) and this guidance supports social distancing and mitigation measures.

Executive Orders in Vermont

The Governor's Executive Order 01-20, as amended, include restrictions that apply to food and lodging establishments during the COVID-19 emergency. All Executive Order documents and addenda are available on the Governor's [website](#).

[Addendum 2](#) restricts restaurants and bars to take-out, curbside and delivery services with no on-premise consumption. Refer to [Addendum 7](#) and [Addendum 9](#) for details about the suspension of lodging operations unless these entities provide services or functions deemed critical to public health and safety.

ACCD has developed a [business FAQ](#) for how the Executive Order applies. Employers with questions about acceptable continuation of business operations should contact the ACCD: <https://bit.ly/covid-vt-business-operations>.

If a business is considered essential but is unable to abide by the provisions required in the Executive Orders – such as implementing measures for social distancing and limiting non-essential gatherings – that business must cease operating.

Best Practices

Businesses that adjust operations to implement these Orders and remain operating must ensure that food safety provisions are followed for take-out and delivery service. Establishments must evaluate if additional measures to reduce contact can be taken, such as:

- Implementing [best practices](#) for retail food stores, restaurants, and food pick-up/delivery during COVID-19 pandemic
- Have employees wear [cloth face coverings](#). Even while wearing a face covering, all workers should still stay 6 feet away from others, wash hands often, and avoid touching their face.
- [Implementing health and safety tips](#) to achieve the social distance guidelines of six (6) feet distance between people.
- Discontinuing self-serve operations. Examples of such operations include continental breakfast, salad bars, buffets and dispensers.

- [Post signs](#) that remind customers to implement social distancing at registers and check-out lines.
- Ensuring all employee break areas accommodate social distancing.

Everyday Preventive Measures

Person-to-person spread of the virus is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Much is still unknown about how the virus spreads. Take these everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Even with proper handwashing, Vermont requires that food workers use a barrier such as tongs, gloves, or other utensil to prevent direct hand contact with food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Keep restrooms stocked with soap and towels or hand dryers.
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers to use, especially if there is no soap and water.
- Be sure to clean and sanitize any objects or surfaces customers may touch, including restroom surfaces, menus, condiments, etc.

Stay Home When Sick

Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 by food. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

- Sick employees should follow the CDC's [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). Employers should consult with the health department for additional guidance.
- [If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19](#), employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality.
- Create protocols for employees [returning to work after a possible exposure \(CDC\)](#).
- Talk with your workers about employee health requirements and expectations. Now is a good time to make sure everyone is on the same page.
- Ensure that your sick leave policy makes it easy for employees to stay home if they need to. Make sure employees know these policies and understand your expectations.
- Plan for absenteeism by identifying essential functions and creating plans for continuity of operations.
- Consider what you need to maintain critical operations (identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, temporarily suspend some operations, if needed).
- Facilities should re-double their [cleaning and sanitation efforts](#) to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.

Use Routine Cleaning Procedures

It is expected that the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is, like other coronaviruses, also susceptible to EPA-registered sanitizers and disinfectants. Special processes beyond routine cleaning and sanitizing are not recommended at this time.

- Remember, cleaning and sanitizing are not the same. Clean with soap and water to remove dirt and food from surfaces. Sanitize with chemicals or heat to reduce germs. Surfaces that look clean may still have germs on them that you can't see. Sanitizing reduces these germs to safer levels.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that are frequently touched. Surfaces such as remote controls, kitchen counters, doorknobs, bathroom surfaces, keyboards, tables and chairs, faucet handles, tabletops, menus, phones and tablets, the outside of condiment containers and other items frequently handled.
- Follow the instructions on your cleaner for how long the surface needs to remain wet for it to be effective.

- Food-contact surfaces should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized after each use.
- Only use sanitizers registered with EPA as a sanitizer. Read the sanitizer label and follow usage directions. Be sure to measure the concentration of the sanitizer with test strips to make sure the active ingredient is available.
- The EPA has a [list of registered sanitizers](#) labeled for use against the novel coronavirus. Note: There may be additional disinfectants that meet the criteria and EPA will update the list as needed.
- If you have questions about your specific sanitizer, please carefully read the package label or reach out to your chemical provider for more information.
- If you use disinfectant wipes, use according to package directions. Do not reuse the wipes to wipe down multiple surfaces. Throw used wipes in the trash.

Resources

[CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)

[FDA Food Safety and COVID-19 Q&A](#)

[FDA Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)