

COVID-19: Public health guidance for re-opening your restaurant

June 12, 2020

This document provides guidance for businesses re-opening their restaurant, or other food premises, after being closed or limited to take-out and delivery only.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Middlesex-London Health Unit website (www.healthunit.com/novel-coronavirus) regularly for updates and additional guidance.

All Food Premises are responsible for following food safety requirements to reduce the risk of foodborne illness, as outlined in the [Ontario Regulation 493/17 - Food Premises](#). Increased cleaning and sanitizing within premises and proper personal hygiene (e.g. frequent handwashing, covering sneeze) among staff and clients will help to prevent the spread of illness.

Staff screening

- Before each shift, please actively [screen](#) staff to identify if they:
 1. Have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing,
 2. Have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days, or
 3. Have been instructed by public health to self-isolate due to travel or contact history.Any staff that answers “yes” to any of these conditions should be sent home and advised to follow public health guidance.
- Staff should be reminded to stay home if they are sick.

Before re-opening

If your premises has been closed, the following are recommended actions to be taken prior to opening:

- Ensure faucets are working properly and flush pipes for at least five minutes.
- Ensure hand washing stations are adequate and functional.
- Check thoroughly for signs of pest activity. Consider contracting a licenced pest management company prior to opening to ensure there is no infestation.
- Thoroughly clean the premises before opening.
 - Wash, rinse and sanitize all food contact surfaces.
 - Clean and disinfect all non-food contact surfaces, including high touch areas, such as, door handles and equipment knobs.
- Clean and disinfect washrooms and ensure adequate supplies are available.
- Check the condition of all food and discard unfit products.
- Ensure all equipment is in good working condition (including dishwashers, coolers, hot holding units).
- Ensure adequate amounts of detergents and sanitizers are available on-site for cleaning, sanitizing, and dishwashing.

Outdoor dining spaces

- As of June 12, 2020, outdoor dining spaces are permitted to open.
- Indoor facilities are to remain closed except to allow access to patio/outdoor dining areas, washrooms, food pickup, payment or for other health and safety purposes.
- If you are hoping to add, extend or alter an outdoor dining area or patio, please contact your local municipality to discuss any building, fire or by-law requirements.

Physical Distancing

- Encourage customers to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others.
 - Ensure at least 2 metres between groups.
 - Limit each group to 10 or less people unless all individuals are from the same household.
- Limit the number of people in the food premises.
 - Consider using reservations.
 - Consider having customers wait outside until their table is ready.
- Consider the flow of traffic throughout the space to facilitate physical distancing.
 - Consider separate entrance and exit points.
 - Allow enough space for staff movement.
- Where physical distancing is not possible consider other controls such as installing plexiglass barriers, or the use of face masks or covering.
- Minimize the time staff spend within 2 metres/6 feet of customers.

Signage

- Post a [sign](#) at the entrance reminding customers who are sick to delay their visit.
- Post simple signage to clearly communicate to customers the safety precautions and physical distancing measures that are being taken.
 - Consider directional arrows to indicate flow.
 - Consider setting up tape or ropes to organize potential line ups, respecting physical distancing.

Cleaning and disinfection

- Menus: reusable menus should be cleaned and disinfected between customers.
 - Consider alternatives such as single-use paper, online, menu-boards or chalkboards.
- Tables: tables must be cleared and then cleaned and disinfected between customers.
 - If tables cannot be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. picnic tables), consider using tablecloths or table covers, or posting signage indicating that tables are not disinfected.
 - Consider replacing condiments (e.g. ketchup bottle) or seasoning (e.g. salt and pepper shakers) with single-serve options or sanitize between uses.
 - Consider rolling or packaging utensils
- Clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces frequently (door handles, countertops).
 - Wipe down debit machine between customers with a disinfectant (or sanitizer).
- Washrooms must be available for customer use and must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary environment (at least twice per day).

Staff

- Train staff on how best to serve food and beverages while maximizing physical distancing and avoiding 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).
- Assign staff to specific tasks and minimize contact between them.
- Strongly encourage staff to maintain physical distancing (2 metres or 6 feet) from other staff and customers as much as possible.
- It is strongly recommended that staff wear a face mask or covering.
 - Ensure staff have access to face masks or coverings as needed.
- Train staff on the proper use of gloves and face masks. Gloves are not required, but if used, must be changed frequently with handwashing between uses.
- Encourage frequent handwashing using the [correct technique](#), and to avoid touching one's face with unwashed hands.
- Encourage staff to cough or sneeze into a bent elbow, and to immediately wash their hands with soap and water.

During active operation

- The owner/operator, or another person appointed for that purpose, should be present and checking to ensure adherence to public health protocols.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer for customers.
- Consider keeping a log of the names and phone numbers for all customers with a check-in time so they can be traced later if necessary.

Resources

- Government of Ontario. Restaurant and food services health and safety during COVID-19. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario. Available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/restaurant-and-food-services-health-and-safety-during-covid-19>.
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Restaurant and Food Service: Guidance for Health and Safety. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario. Available at: <https://files.ontario.ca/mltsd-restaurants-covid-tip-sheet-en-2020-05-19.pdf>.