



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Interim Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for Restaurants and Bars

March 14, 2020

Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission, including seating areas, waiting rooms, lines, and any other time a large number of people are in the same space. All restaurants, bars, and other food service providers should create a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their establishment.

This guidance will help restaurants and bars plan and prepare for COVID-19 in their communities.

Plan Ahead

- Review any emergency plans you already have and update them if necessary.
- Make a plan for what you will do if large numbers of employees are unable to attend work, which may occur if schools are closed or their family members are sick. Identify key positions and cross-train staff to ensure all essential functions will be covered.
- Consider alternative options to gathering lots of people in a small area, such as having people wait in their cars and alerting them by phone when their table is ready instead of standing in a waiting area.
- [Stay informed](#) about COVID-19 in your community.

Communicate

- Instruct patrons to stay home if they are sick. Be flexible about cancelling or rescheduling reservations and events so sick people and people taking care of COVID-19 patients are able to stay home.
- If you have employees who are at a higher risk for complications from COVID-19, including people over 65 and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, chronic lung disease and chronic heart disease, or a compromised immune system (e.g., cancer, cancer treatment, or other immunosuppressant treatments), find positions that minimize contact with the public.
- Create flexible sick leave policies so employees stay home from work when they are sick.
- Post signs encouraging patrons to leave immediately if they begin to show symptoms of illness, COVID-19 or otherwise.

Keep Everyone Healthy

- Have respiratory hygiene supplies available for employees and patrons, including hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and lined trash cans. These supplies should be placed at entrances, near host stands, in the kitchen, and any other locations necessary.
- Promote behaviors that prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including COVID-19, among patrons and employees. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NC DHHS](#).

- Disinfect frequently-touched surfaces with a [cleaning agent that is effective against coronaviruses](#) throughout the day and at close of business.
- [According to the FDA](#), there is no evidence at this time that COVID-19 can be transmitted through food or food packaging. Food service establishments should still follow all standard hygiene and food safety practices when preparing or handling food.

Practice Social Distancing

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state people should practice social distancing by remaining six feet apart to minimize the risk of coronavirus infection. Recognizing that this is may be challenging, below are examples of application.
- Place tables six feet apart from each other. If necessary, close some tables to ensure that there is adequate space between groups of patrons.
- If you typically have people waiting in line, consider marking six-foot intervals on the floor for patrons to stand on.
- Only let as many people in as your establishment can accommodate while everyone remains six feet apart. If people must wait to be let in, have them wait in their cars and contact them by phone when they can enter.
- Have employees remain six feet apart from patrons whenever possible. (CDC defines close contact as being within approximately 6 feet (2 meters) of a COVID-19 case for 10 or more minutes.)

Cancelling or Postponing Events

- [As directed the Governor](#), all events greater than 100 people should be postponed or cancelled to prevent the transmission of COVID-19.
- If your establishment hosts events that gather up to 100 people, please read the guidance about [managing events](#).

Patrons Later Diagnosed with COVID-19

- If a patron is diagnosed with COVID-19 after visiting your facility, your local health department may ask you for contact information for anyone who may have had close contact with the patient.
 - If this occurs, attendees who had close contact with the COVID-19 patient will be asked to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days.
- If you are concerned about a patron who was diagnosed with COVID-19 shortly after visiting your business, [contact your local health department](#).
- To prevent the risk of transmission of COVID-19 from contact with contaminated surfaces, ensure that all high contact areas of the facility are cleaned with an [agent that is active against coronaviruses](#).

For more information about COVID-19 preparedness for businesses, please see the CDC's [Resources for Businesses and Employers](#).

For general information about COVID-19, refer to the [North Carolina COVID-19 website](#).