

March 30, 2020

## **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Information for Food Premises**

### **What is Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and how does it spread?**

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection caused by a newly identified virus. The infection has symptoms similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold: cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing. While most people infected with COVID-19 experience only mild illness, severe illness can occur in some people, especially in those with weaker immune systems, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, cancer or lung disease. COVID-19 is transmitted by droplets when a person coughs or sneezes in close contact with another person, or onto surfaces which are later touched by another. The virus can be spread by touch if a person has used their hands to cover their mouth or nose when they cough. At this time, the virus causing COVID-19 is not known to be airborne, and does not pass through the skin.

### **Should I close my food premises?**

In British Columbia as of March 20, 2020, all restaurants can only operate as a take-out or delivery service. All dining areas must be closed.

### **What if an employee is sick?**

All food premises are to have an updated employee illness policy that is communicated to all staff immediately.

- Tell your employees that if they are sick with acute respiratory illness symptoms, they should remain at home and contact HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.
- If any employee is showing even mild symptoms for COVID-19, ask them to leave work immediately and have them contact 8-1-1 for further guidance.
- Employees can also use the online [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to know when to seek healthcare. We do not recommend returning to work. Further information can be found on the [BCCDC website](#).
- All areas used by ill persons are to be closed off before beginning to clean and disinfect the affected areas. All food surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized.

## **What if an employee has returned from travelling?**

At this time the provincial government is recommending against all non-essential travel outside of Canada. As of March 12, 2020 anyone returning from international travel must self-isolate for 14 days (2 weeks) before returning to work. They do not need to be tested for COVID-19 before returning to work. Encourage employees to self-monitor for symptoms of respiratory illness including a cough, sneeze, fever, sore throat or difficulty breathing.

**\*Tell your employees that if they are sick they should remain at home. Advise them to use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool to know when to seek healthcare.\***

## **Should I do anything different at my food premises to minimize risk of COVID-19 transmission?**

There are a number of new things you should do, including:

1. Encourage social distancing, such as setting up ropes to organize potential lineups with a sign with instructions to stay 1-2 meters apart and reduce opportunities for interactions among patrons and prolonged close contact. Focus on ensuring sick staff or patrons stay away from the premises and self-isolate.
2. Have no more than 50 people (including staff onsite) and practice social distancing at all times.
3. Enhance your premises' sanitation plan and schedule, and review with all employees.
4. Ensure staff practice proper hygiene including frequent hand washing, and proper cough and sneeze etiquette (into elbows rather than hands).
5. Change gloves whenever they become contaminated. Practice proper hand washing before putting on a new pair of gloves.

## **A food premises are to continue the following to reduce COVID-risk among their patrons:**

1. Enhance and increase the frequency of cleaning high-touch areas (such as door knobs, faucets, payment card touch pads, bathroom surfaces, self-checkout screens, shopping carts, menus and condiments) with regular disinfecting solutions found in your sanitation plan (bleach or quaternary ammonium is recommended). Use detergents prior to disinfecting the surfaces in the premises. Specialized disinfection products are not necessary.
2. Ensure service areas are properly cleaned and sanitized according to the product manufacturer's instructions after each customer service, staff shift changes, and before and after closing.
3. Have separate cleaning and sanitizing equipment for customer and kitchen areas.
4. Have dedicated staff clean and sanitize the service area.
5. Regularly clean and disinfect equipment for handling payments.
6. Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers for patrons.
7. Ensure washrooms have liquid soap, paper towels and warm running water at all times. Food service workers must properly wash hands with plain soap and water.
8. Place hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette signs in the food premises (provided in this document).
9. Place signage on front doors to tell guests not to enter if they are feeling ill and to contact HealthLink BC 8-1-1 if they have symptoms of COVID-19 (provided in this document).

10. Encourage your patrons to use delivery (e.g., free delivery if it is an option) to avoid patrons lining up to pick up meals.

### **What about if my food premises offers self-service like a buffet, salad bar or bulk foods?**

At this time, all self-service buffets, beverage stations, salad bars and any other self-serve foods such as bulk foods must be discontinued in the food premises. If you do offer this food service, you must:

- Only offer bulk foods if they are dispensed by staff.
- Provide hand sanitizer to customers before they access the area.

### **Should food handlers be using disposable gloves?**

Frequent and proper handwashing is encouraged as the best way of preventing all viral respiratory infections and other foodborne illnesses. If a food premises chooses to use gloves, employees should wash their hands thoroughly before putting on the gloves. Change the gloves before you handle money, credit card machines, cleaners, and after other contamination. Wearing gloves does not exclude food handlers from washing their hands.

### **Do you have further questions?**

Please refer to our website for further up-to-date information on COVID-19.

[www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)

There is a BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool provided through the BC Ministry of Health:

<https://covid19.thrive.health/>

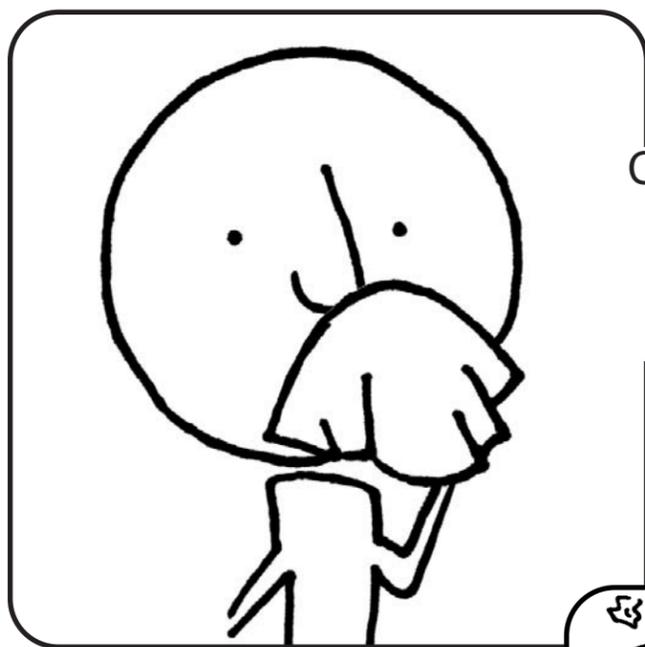
BCCDC information for food premises: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses>

Contact us with questions about food premises and health protection at 604-675-3800; if staff have individual health concerns, please call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

The province has created a phone service to provide **non-medical** information about COVID-19, including the latest information about travel recommendations and social distancing. Information is available in more than 110 languages, 7:30 am to 8:00 pm at **1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319)** or via text message at **604-630-0300**.

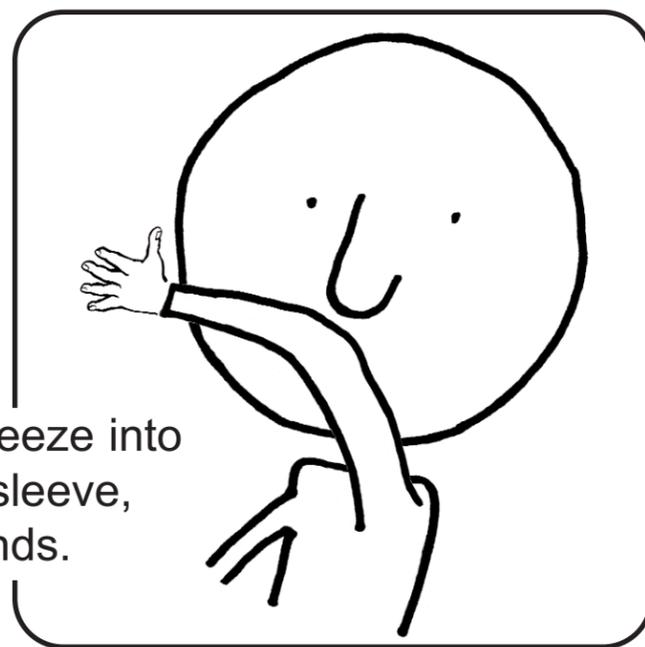
Stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick!

# Cover your Cough



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze

or  
cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

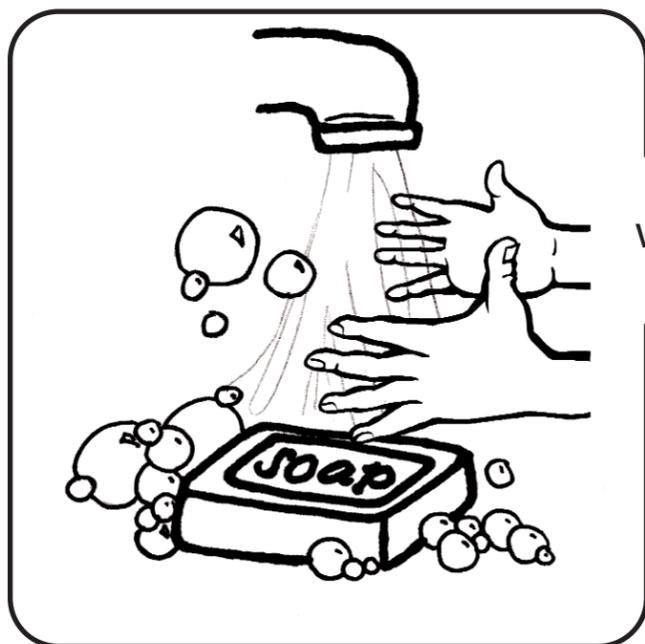


Put your used tissue in the waste basket.



# Clean your Hands

after coughing or sneezing.



Wash hands with soap and warm water

or  
clean with alcohol-based hand cleaner.

