

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

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 may also benefit from reviewing other protocols if their workplace includes other work environments such as office space (</en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/offices>), or retail services (</en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/retail>). Employers must also ensure they are abiding by any orders, notices, or guidance issued by the provincial health officer [\[link\]](#), and the appropriate health authority, which are relevant to their workplace.

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Developing a COVID-19 Safety Plan

Employers resuming operations are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan (</en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en>) 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 the COVID-19 and returning to safe operation (<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-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.

WorkSafeBC will not be reviewing or approving the plans of individual employers, but in accordance with the order of the Provincial Health Officer [\[link\]](#), 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 use as you develop the plan for your workplace.

These protocols should be followed to the extent that they are applicable to your workplace. You may need to identify and implement additional protocols if these 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.

The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time.

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 risks, supply workers with personal protective equipment (PPE), such as non-medical masks. PPE should not be used as the only control measure. It should only be used in combination with other measures.

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.

Business resumption guidance from government in this phase (BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy) permits friends and family to get together in small groups of two to six people, which means that restaurants should limit the number of people seated together to a maximum of six.

This means that in this phase of business resumption, restaurants will need to calculate how many tables of six will fit into their space, allowing for 2 metres between tables and factoring in space for seats at the table. Booths which provide physical barriers between tables will allow for more diners.

The maximum occupancy of the entire space can be determined using guidance provided in the COVID-19 Safety Plan (</en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en>).

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 (</en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/covid-19-health-safety-selecting-using-masks?lang=en>).

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 (</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-handwashing?lang=en>) 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 (</en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-handwashing?lang=en>) 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 (</en/resources/health-safety/information-sheets/covid-19-health-safety-selecting-using-masks?lang=en>).

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 Safety Plan

(/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en)

Employers resuming operations following work interruptions related to COVID-19 must develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan. This tool will guide you through a six-step process to help you create your plan....

Publication Date: May 2020 | PDF | Checklist

| Download (/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en&direct) | Preview

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

(/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-cover-coughs-sneezes?lang=en)

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

Additional... ([https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=\[English\]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=[English]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f))

Publication Date: May 2020 | [PDF](#) | [Poster](#)

| [Download \(/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-cover-coughs-sneezes?lang=en&direct\)](/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-cover-coughs-sneezes?lang=en&direct)

| [Preview](#)

Help prevent the spread of COVID-19: Entry check for visitors

[\(/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-entry-check-visitors?lang=en\)](/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-entry-check-visitors?lang=en)

This poster outlines the symptoms of COVID-19, and warns visitors to stay home and away from workplaces if they feel ill.

Additional... ([https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=\[English\]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/forms-resources#sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=[English]&tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f))

Publication Date: May 2020 | [PDF](#) | [Poster](#)

| [Download \(/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-entry-check-visitors?lang=en&direct\)](/en/resources/health-safety/posters/help-prevent-spread-covid-19-entry-check-visitors?lang=en&direct)

| [Preview](#)

More resources [\(/en/forms-resources#tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f&sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=\[English\]\)](/en/forms-resources#tags=Covid-19|a96b6c96607345c481bb8621425ea03f&sort=%40fcomputeditemdatefield343%20descending&f:language-facet=[English])

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