



COVID-19 Guidance - Restaurants & Food Service

The expanding global outbreak of respiratory infections due to a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has now been declared a pandemic. Cases of COVID-19 are rapidly increasing in Georgia.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. The best way to prevent infection with any respiratory virus is to use the same preventative strategies used during a normal cold and flu season: get a flu shot, wash hands regularly, cover coughs and sneezes, and stay home when experiencing symptoms of illness until they resolve.

Everyone has a role in keeping our community healthy, and that includes our food service partners at local restaurants, mobile food units and food trucks.

The Governor issued an Executive Order, signed 4/02/2020 and effective beginning 6:00PM on 4/13/2020 until 11:59PM Monday 4/30/2020 for a statewide shelter-in-place. Because of this, dining rooms must be closed and only take out, curbside pick-up, drive-thru, delivery, or third-party delivery options are allowed.

Everyday Disease Prevention

Take simple steps to support a healthy work environment. These are important every day, but especially when preventing the spread of respiratory illnesses like COVID-19 and flu.

- Post signs that encourage [staying home when sick \(link is external\)](#), [covering coughs and sneezes \(link is external\)](#), and [washing hands frequently with warm soapy water \(link is external\)](#) at workplace entrances, restrooms, employee break rooms and in other visible areas.
- Remind people to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Provide tissues, waste baskets and EPA approved hand sanitizer in areas where employees gather or meet.
- Provide disposable wipes and other cleaning materials so that frequently touched surfaces (counters, doorknobs, toilets, phones, etc.) can be properly wiped down by employees before each use.
- Follow recommendations for cleaning and sanitizing your workspace.

Measures to Protect Your Customers

- While customers are waiting to place an order, or pick up an order from your establishment, you must ensure each person can maintain a 6-foot separation from one another. If this is not possible, then no more than 10 customers will be allowed in your establishment at any given time.
- Consumer self-service areas for condiments, drinks, etc., must be monitored to ensure that patrons are at least 6 feet apart while in those areas as well.
- Encourage all customers to wash their hands to help reduce illness transmission.

- Keep restrooms stocked with soap and paper towels. You may notice that sinks in customer restrooms need to be stocked more frequently.
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer (approved by the Environmental Protection Agency) is available for customers to use if there is no access to soap and water.
- Be sure to routinely clean and sanitize any objects or surfaces customers may touch, including restroom surfaces, door handles, counters, menus, and condiment containers, etc.
- Suspend the use of Personal Identification Number (“PIN”) pads, PIN entry devices, electronic signature capture and any other credit card receipt signature requirements to the extent such suspension is permitted by agreements with credit card companies and credit agencies.
- **ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR MOBILE FOOD UNIT OPERATORS:**
 - You are still required to obtain permission from all applicable sources prior to setting up in a location to vend. An approved restroom must be available within 200 feet for your employees.
 - Clearly mark areas outside of your unit where customers can wait in line and maintain at least a 6-foot separation from each other.
 - It is recommended that you post signs or verbally remind your customers that they should not congregate in groups around your unit where a 6-foot separation cannot be maintained from one another. If customers cannot maintain a 6-foot separation from one another, you will be required to limit the number of people in the area to no more than 10 at a time.

A hand sanitizer must be approved by the Environmental Protection Agency before it can be advertised or used. Restrooms for employees and customers should be kept stocked with adequate soap, warm water and paper towels, as proper handwashing is recommended for reducing the spread of viruses and bacteria. Food service employees are not to use a hand sanitizer unless it meets the requirements of Chapter 511-6-1-.03(5)(e).

Employee Health

- Due to the potential for asymptomatic spread of COVID-19, consider having all employees wear masks.
- Screen and evaluate employees who exhibit signs of illness, such as a fever over 100.4°F, cough, or shortness of breath.
- Support employees staying home when they are sick. Per CDC guidance, employers are encouraged not to require employees to provide a doctor’s note to return to work, because doing so will burden the medical system.
- Ensure that your sick leave policy makes it easy for employees to stay home if they need to. Make sure you are following federal, state, and local sick leave laws and policies. Make sure employees know these policies and understand your expectations.
- Create or update flexible policies that allow employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or child who cannot go to school.
- Remind employees that anyone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 or becomes sick at work with symptoms of COVID-19, such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath should go home immediately. They should return **ONLY AFTER** the following are met:

- They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers) AND
- Other symptoms, such as cough and shortness of breath, have improved AND
- At least 7 days have passed since their symptoms first appeared
- Make sure supervisors send employees home if they are sick.
- Plan for absenteeism by identifying essential functions and creating plans for continuity of operations.
 - Cross-train staff to perform essential functions so you can operate if key people are absent.
 - Consider what you need to maintain critical operations (identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, temporarily suspend some operations, if needed).
- To the greatest extent possible, arrange workers to maintain proper social distancing while performing job duties and while on break.
- Discourage workers from using or touching other's personal effects such as phones, etc.

Promote Proper Handwashing

- Make sure handwashing signs are put where employees can see them.
- Ensure handwashing sinks are adequately stocked with soap and paper towels.
- [Wash hands thoroughly \(link is external\)](#) with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- Dry hands with paper towels and throw the paper towels in the trash.
- Do not handle any ready-to-eat foods with bare hands.

Remember to Wash Hands:

- After coughing, sneezing, and wiping your nose.
- After using the bathroom.
- When preparing foods.
- When switching from preparing uncooked foods to working with ready to eat foods.
- After touching your face or hair.
- After touching animals.
- After eating and using tobacco/nicotine.
- After handling money or other forms of payment.
- After handling dirty equipment or utensils.
- Before putting on disposable gloves.
- Whenever hands become dirty.

Use Routine Cleaning Procedures

- Early evidence suggests that the COVID-19 virus can survive for several days at room temperature. However, special processes beyond routine cleaning and sanitizing are not recommended at this time. **Only use sanitizers that have been approved by the Environmental Protection Agency according to the product label.**

Cleaning and Sanitizing

- 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. Always follow the product's label when using sanitizers.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that are frequently touched. Surfaces such as remote controls, kitchen counters, doorknobs, bathroom surfaces, keyboards, tables and chairs, and phones and tablets should be cleaned often.
- Food-contact surfaces must be washed, rinsed, and sanitized after each use.
- Use disposable gloves for cleaning and sanitizing. Throw them away before leaving the area and wash hands.
- 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.
- For a list of approved disinfectants from the Environmental Protection Agency that are shown to be effective against SARS-CoV-2, click here: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>. *Note: These disinfection concentrations may exceed the allowable levels allowed for use on food contact surfaces such as dishes and utensils. Be sure to follow the label directions for FOOD CONTACT SURFACES when using the chemical near or on utensils and food contact surfaces.*

Resources

[Multnomah County, Washington's Guidance for Restaurants and Food Service](#)
[Interim Guidance for Business and Employers to Plan and Respond to COVID-19](#) CDC
[Getting Your Workplace Ready for COVID-19](#) World Health Organization
[Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Situation Summary](#), Georgia DPH