

The Health Department continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone has a role in keeping our community healthy, and that includes our business partners in food and lodging establishments. This guidance supports prevention measures that help to slow the spread of the virus.

Executive Orders in Vermont

The Governor's Executive Order 01-20, as amended, include restrictions that apply to food and lodging establishments during the COVID-19 emergency. All Executive Order documents and addenda are available on the Governor's [website](#).

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) has guidance for restaurants, catering, food service, social clubs and bars to transition from sector-specific guidance to [universal guidance](#). [Contact the ACCD](#) if you have questions about acceptable continuation of business operations.

You can also find information on the [current travel rules](#).

COVID-19 in the Workplace

If someone was exposed to COVID-19 at your business, a team of infectious disease experts will work closely with you. They will make recommendations to keep your customers and employees safe. In most cases, when appropriate steps are taken quickly, there is no need to shut down your business. Here is what you need to do:

- If an **employee or customer tells you that they have tested positive for COVID-19**, have them call the Health Department at 802-863-7240.
- Review the [Checklist for Employers: COVID-19 in the Workplace](#).
- If **you are contacted by the Health Department because a risk has been identified at your business**, the team will walk you through the next steps.
- If you believe **your establishment has been exposed to COVID-19**, please call the Health Department at 802-863-7240.

The team will follow up with everyone who tests positive, calculate the period of time when they were contagious, and find out what locations they visited during that time. The team works hard to determine which locations may have been at risk, based on their expertise and knowledge of how the virus spreads. You can learn more about the [steps the Health Department takes](#) to quickly respond when someone tests positive. Vermont businesses play a critical role in keeping employers, employees, and customers safe and healthy. Working together with the Health Department is the best way to lessen the risks and contain the spread of COVID-19.

Read the [guidance for employees when a co-worker tests positive](#).

Cloth Face Covering Requirement

[Addendum 10](#) requires that employees wear non-medical cloth face coverings (bandanna, scarf, or nonmedical mask, etc.) over their nose and mouth when in the presence of others. In the case of retail cashiers, a translucent shield or “sneeze guard” is acceptable in lieu of a mask.

Safety Requirements

Businesses that adjust operations to implement these Orders and remain operating must ensure that food safety provisions are followed. Establishments must evaluate if additional measures to reduce contact can be taken, such as:

- Implementing [best practices](#) for retail food stores, restaurants, and food pick-up/delivery during COVID-19 pandemic.
- Have employees wear [cloth face coverings](#). Even while wearing a face covering, all workers should still stay 6 feet away from others, wash hands often, and avoid touching their face.
- [Implementing health and safety tips](#) to achieve the social distance guidelines of 6 feet distance between people.
- [Post signs](#) that remind customers to implement social distancing at registers and check-out lines.
- Ensuring all employee break areas accommodate social distancing.

Everyday Preventive Measures

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through close contact from person to person, including between people who are near each other (within about 6 feet). When people with COVID-19 cough, sneeze, sing, talk, or breathe they produce respiratory droplets. Another person can become infected if they inhale the droplets, or if droplets land in their nose or mouth.

Take these everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Even with proper handwashing, Vermont requires that food workers use a barrier such as tongs, gloves, or other utensil to prevent direct hand contact with food.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or the inside of your elbow. Then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands or use sanitizer.
- Keep restrooms stocked with soap and towels or hand dryers.
- Make sure alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers to use, especially if there is no soap and water.

Stay Home When Sick

Currently, there is no evidence that people can get COVID-19 by eating or handling food. Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, the COVID-19 virus causes respiratory illness. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or possibly eyes. However, this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

- Talk with your workers about employee health requirements and expectations. Now is a good time to make sure everyone is on the same page.
- Ensure that your sick leave policy makes it easy for employees to stay home if they need to. Make sure employees know these policies and understand your expectations.
- Plan for absenteeism by identifying essential functions and creating plans for continuity of operations.
- Consider what you need to maintain critical operations (identify alternative suppliers, prioritize customers, temporarily suspend some operations, if needed).
- Facilities should re-double their [cleaning and sanitation efforts](#) to control any risks that might be associated with workers who are ill regardless of the type of virus or bacteria. For example, facilities are required to maintain clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces.

Use Routine Cleaning Procedures

Based on available epidemiological data and studies of environmental transmission factors, surface transmission is not the main route by which SARS-CoV-2 spreads, and the risk from surfaces is considered to be low. The principal mode by which people are infected with SARS-CoV-2 is through [exposure to respiratory droplets carrying infectious virus](#).

Cleaning surfaces using soap or detergent, and not disinfecting, is enough to reduce risk in most situations. When focused on high-touch surfaces, cleaning with soap or detergent should be enough to further reduce the relatively low transmission risk.

Disinfection is recommended in indoor settings where there has been a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 within the last 24 hours. Even without cleaning or disinfecting, the risk of transmission from any surfaces is minor after 3 days (72 hours).

Resources

- [CDC Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- [FDA Food Safety and COVID-19 Q&A](#)
- [FDA Best Practices for Retail Food Stores, Restaurants, and Food Pick-Up/Delivery Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)