Food Service Worker Safety Information
GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS

What is COVID-19 disease?
COVID-19 is a viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus. Many cases have mild or moderate illness and do not require a clinic visit and most do not require hospitalization. Those at highest risk for severe illness include older people or those who have certain underlying health conditions.

How COVID-19 spreads
The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly spread by respiratory droplets when someone infected with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes. The droplets containing the virus are expelled and can be breathed in by someone nearby.

It is also possible for the virus to be spread if you touch a surface contaminated with respiratory droplets containing the virus and then touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. The virus cannot enter the body through the skin. Washing your hands for at least 20 seconds and cleaning frequently touched surfaces are good ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Screen yourself before reporting to work

Are you feeling sick?
If your answer is YES, stay home and notify your supervisor. If you feel sick, you should stay home until symptoms resolve.

Have you experienced symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (temperature/fever of 100.4°F or higher; new or increased cough; shortness of breath) in the last 7 days?
If you can say YES to any of the above, then you should stay home. Do not report to work until:

▪ Symptoms including cough or shortness of breath have improved AND
▪ At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared AND
▪ Fever (100.4°F or higher) has been gone for at least 3 days without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Have you had close contact with someone who was diagnosed or suspected to have COVID-19 within the last 14 days?

▪ Close contact is defined as: Having been within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 or might have COVID-19 for a prolonged period of time. Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, or having a prolonged visit with someone with COVID-19.

If your answer is YES, you will need to stay home for 14 days before returning to work.
If you are not sure about your symptoms, talk with your manager, health care provider, or call the MDH COVID-19 hotline at 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903.

Monitor your health while at work

If you do not feel well for any reason during your workday and begin having mild symptoms of illness (fever, runny nose, sneezing, or other respiratory symptoms), you should talk with your manager, then go directly home.

Wash your hands often while at work

Wash your hands only in sinks designated for handwashing. Do not wash your hands in sinks used for utensils, food preparation, or other services. Keep the designated handwashing area clear of any soiled kitchen utensils. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.

- Wet your hands with warm running water.
- Apply soap.
- Rub your hands for 10 to 15 seconds.
- Rinse your hands.
- Dry your hands.
- Keep your hands clean.
- Gloves, wet-wipes, or hand sanitizers are not substitutes for proper handwashing.

When to wash your hands

- Before starting to work with food, utensils, or equipment.
- Before putting on gloves.
- When switching between raw foods and ready-to-eat foods.
- After handling soiled utensils and equipment.
- After coughing, sneezing, using a tissue, or using tobacco products.
- After eating and drinking.
- After touching skin, face, or hair.
- After handling animals.
- After using the bathroom.
- As often as needed during food preparation and when changing tasks.

Resource

Handwashing for Employees (PDF)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/handwashfs.pdf)
When should I wear gloves during food preparation?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Code recommendations for handwashing and glove use in food service and retail food stores have not changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Food Code 2017 Section 2-301.11). “With limited exceptions, employees may not contact exposed, ready-to-eat foods with their bare hands and shall use suitable utensils such as deli tissue, spatulas, tongs, single-use gloves, or dispensing equipment” (Food Code 2017 Section 3-301.11). Gloves are not a substitute for handwashing or hand hygiene.

If your task requires direct contact with ready-to-eat food, wash your hands and the exposed portions of your arms for 20 seconds before putting on gloves and before touching food or food-contact surfaces. Wash your hands immediately after removing gloves.

Resources


Preventing Contamination from Hands (PDF) (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/nohandcontfs.pdf)

When should I wear a mask during food prep or during food distribution?

Staff members working in school food service programs are encouraged to wear cloth face coverings during the workday as much as possible. These alternative masks are often homemade and should not be medical-grade facemasks, such as surgical facemasks or N95 respirators. The cloth masks are used to reduce the likelihood that the wearer will transmit virus to other staff members or children. Cloth masks should be created and worn in accordance with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Wearing cloth masks is not a substitute for frequent handwashing, avoiding touching the face, and practicing social distancing, which are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.

Resources


Video: How to Sew a Simple Fabric Face Mask (YouTube) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOJ_sm137fQ)

This video is one example of how to sew a mask. It is not an endorsement of this YouTube channel or related videos or products.
How should workers maintain social distancing in a food prep area?

To prevent COVID-19 transmission, practice social distancing, which means maintaining approximately 6 feet of separation between people as much as possible.

- Food workers should evaluate their current space for food preparation and allow for at least 6 feet of separation between themselves while performing required tasks.
- If space permits, food workers should be assigned a repetitive task that will prevent them from having to move to another part of the kitchen/food prep area for additional kitchen supplies or other needs. MDH understands that this might not always be practical due to the size and logistics of the current kitchen workspace.

Resources for cleaning and disinfecting your facility

In addition to proper handwashing, routinely clean and disinfect work surfaces.

- EPA List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS–CoV-2 (https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)

For more information, visit Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-9) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html), or call the COVID-19 hotline at 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903.

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To obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-5000.