

Food Service Worker Safety Information: Guidance for School Food Programs

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 (new onset cough OR shortness of breath by themselves OR at least two of the following symptoms: fever (100.4°F or higher) chills; muscle pain; sore throat; loss of sense of smell or taste and gastrointestinal symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, or nausea since your last day at work?

- If you can say YES to any of the above, then you should stay home. Do not report to work until:
 - Stay home at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND
 - Until no fever for at least 3 days without medication AND
 - Improvement of other symptoms

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 longer than 15 minutes. Close contact can occur while caring for, living with, or having a longer than 15 minute visit with someone who has 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 before deciding to go to work or returning to work. Schools are required to follow the [Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf).

Monitor your health while at work

If you do not feel well for any reason during your workday and begin having new onset of symptoms: fever (100.4°F or higher) chills; muscle pain; sore throat; loss of sense of smell or taste and gastrointestinal symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, or nausea 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 hand washing. 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 hand washing.

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, hair.
- After handling animals.
- After using the bathroom.
- As often as needed during food preparation and when changing tasks.

Resource

- [Handwashing for Employees \(PDF\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/handwashfs.pdf)
(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 hand washing 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 hand washing 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

- [FDA Retail Food Protection: Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook](http://www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-industryregulatory-assistance-training/retail-food-protection-employee-health-and-personal-hygiene-handbook)
(www.fda.gov/food/retail-food-industryregulatory-assistance-training/retail-food-protection-employee-health-and-personal-hygiene-handbook)
- [Preventing Contamination from Hands \(PDF\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/nohandcontfs.pdf)
(www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/food/docs/fs/nohandcontfs.pdf)

When should I wear a face covering during food prep or during food distribution?

As of July 25, 2020, people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all public indoor spaces and indoor businesses, per Executive Order 20-81. This requirement includes food service workers when at work in an indoor setting, including but not limited to when they are involved in food preparation or distribution.

- The Executive Order provides exemptions for people with medical conditions, mental health conditions, or disabilities that makes them unable to tolerate wearing a face covering.
- If a food service worker is unable to wear a face covering for one of the reasons listed above, or because of work conditions that would make wearing a face covering difficult or unsafe (e.g., due to high temperatures), workers may use face covering alternatives, such as a face shield.

The Executive Order also includes a number of additional face covering recommendations and provides several situations where face coverings may be removed temporarily, provided that social distancing is maintained. For more detailed guidance about the requirements of Executive Order 20-81, visit:

- [Executive Orders from Governor Walz \(mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/governor/news/executiveorders.jsp)
- [Masks and face coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks)
- [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html)
- [Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html)

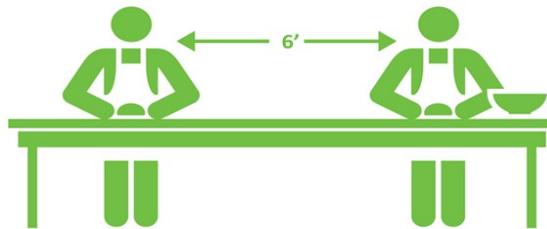
Wearing a face covering is not a substitute for frequent hand washing, avoiding touching the face, and practicing social distancing, which are our best tools to help prevent the spread of illness.

Resources

- [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19 \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html)
- [Video: How to Sew a Simple Fabric Face Mask \(YouTube\) \(www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOJ_sm137fQ\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOJ_sm137fQ)

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.

- [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html)
- [EPA List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 \(www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2\)](https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2)



Minnesota Department of Health | health.mn.gov | 651-201-5000
625 Robert Street North PO Box 64975, St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.

07/22/2020