



GUIDE TO OPERATING A FOOD BUSINESS DURING COVID-19

WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

This guide provides advice for all food businesses who intend to operate during COVID-19 restrictions. Businesses who intend to recommence trading should use this guide and complete the checklist (Appendix A) to ensure that all potential food safety, equipment and maintenance issues are identified and remediated prior to trading. For businesses who will recommence with providing sit-down meals, this guide provides advice on precautionary measures to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19.

CHECK CURRENT RESTRICTIONS

Check the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services website regularly for updates to COVID-19 restrictions as changes may impact your business activities. See the below webpage for updates to restrictions:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW – THE FOUR KEY THEMES

1. STAFF HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- Ensure that staff regularly wash their hands throughout the day. Hands should be washed for 20 seconds with soap, and then dried with clean paper towel.
- Staff should wash their hands after handling food, going to the toilet, touching their face or touching any surfaces or items that may be contaminated. These may include door handles, phones, money, cash registers, garbage or any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves or masks. Delivery drivers should also wash their hands upon entering the premises.
- Display hand wash signage inside the premises to remind staff about hand hygiene.
- Provide hand sanitiser (60-80 per cent alcohol) for staff and customers to use, if available.
- Encourage staff to notify the business if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. Common symptoms include cough, fever and sore throat. All staff who are unwell must self-quarantine for 14 days.
- Businesses should also conduct daily screening of staff to check whether they have symptoms. This includes screening of delivery drivers before they enter the premises.
- As of 1 June 2020, food businesses are required to take contact details of customers who order sit-down meals.

Hand washing is one of the easiest and most effective measures for preventing the spread of COVID-19.



Conduct regular health checks of staff.



- If a staff member does cough or sneeze, this should be done in the crook of their elbow.
- Businesses should have a protocol in place for sending home a staff member (or customer) from the premises who displays symptoms indicative of COVID-19.
- Staff that meet the definition of ‘close contact’ must also be isolated for 14 days.
- Staff members can take the Department of Health and Human Services online self-assessment tool if they believe they have symptoms of COVID-19:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-self-assessment>

2. SOCIAL DISTANCING

- All staff and customers should maintain social distancing within the premises, where practical.
- Currently, people must maintain a distance of 1.5 metres apart and there must be 4 metres squared of space for each person.
- From the 1 June 2020, food businesses are allowed to have up to 20 patrons in each room, provided it also complies with the above distancing requirements.
- Businesses can also make use of various measures to convey social distancing rules. These may include:

- floor markings which convey the 1.5 metre requirement
- signage on walls as a reminder for customers
- queue barriers or social distancing ‘posts’ for customers in queues or to direct traffic flow
- plexiglass barriers for customer checkouts or between dining tables
- pre-recorded audio messages which remind customers of social distancing requirements and
- one-way traffic flow markers such as arrows on floors

- Customers should be encouraged to order over the phone or by email to reduce close contact and queuing.
- Contactless payments should also be encouraged (e.g. tap and pay, paypass, eftpos etc.) rather than paying in cash.
- Staff should be restricted from being in shared spaces, such as break rooms, locker rooms or offices for long periods of time.
- Self-serve stations or food tasting services should be limited and closely monitored.
- If the business has a large team, it may be useful to utilise a ‘split team approach’ which may reduce the number of staff infected if one person becomes sick.

Social distancing is an important measure as the COVID-19 virus spreads on respiratory droplets when we talk, cough or sneeze.





3. CLEANING AND SANITISING

- Identify frequently touched surfaces and items. These will need to be more regularly cleaned and disinfected throughout the day and may include door handles, tables and chairs, folders containing paperwork, phones, cash registers, display counters or baskets and trollies.
- For surfaces that come into contact with food, such as bench tops, a food grade sanitiser must be used.
- Items that are not practical to regularly sanitise, such as sauce bottles, salt and pepper shakers or menus, should be removed from tables.
- Delivery vehicles should also be frequently cleaned and disinfected.
- All staff in the business should be trained in how to disinfect and sanitise surfaces and equipment to not only kill food poisoning bacteria, but to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This training includes demonstrating to staff how to correctly dilute chemicals.
- It may also be helpful to refer to the Australian Government’s Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Principles, which may provide additional information for your COVID-19 cleaning routine:

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>

Cleaning and sanitising is an important measure as the virus can transmit indirectly through contact with contaminated surfaces.



4. FOOD SAFETY, EQUIPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

- If your food business has been closed, conduct a check of all food to determine whether it is safe to sell. For example, this includes checking whether food has expired, food in the freezer may have defrosted or pests may have contaminated food. The premises should also be given a thorough clean.
- Ensure the premises has hot and cold water, electricity and gas.
- All equipment should be in working order. For example, fridges, freezers and hot holding units must be able to maintain the temperatures of $\leq 5^{\circ}\text{C}$, $\leq -15^{\circ}\text{C}$ and $\geq 60^{\circ}\text{C}$, respectively.
- The business should have adequate provisions of cleaning chemicals, soap and paper towels.
- Water should be flushed through systems such as coffee machines, ice machines or slushie machines.

It is important to check that there are no issues with food safety or maintenance of equipment or surfaces before you recommence operations
