

COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Restaurants, Bars and other Food and Drink Establishments

Updated March 24, 2021

This document provides guidance for owners and operators of indoor dining establishments including restaurants, bars, food courts, concession stands and other food and drink establishments.

This document does not replace guidance from the Province, including Ontario's COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open, [O. Reg. 263/20](#) (regulations for the Control level). For specific questions about COVID-19 provincial regulations, please call **Stop the Spread Business Information Line** at 1-888-444-3659.

Owners and operators must ensure measures are in place to keep staff and visitors safe from COVID-19, while ensuring compliance with the requirements outlined in the March 23, 2021 [Instructions from the Medical Officer of Health](#), [Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises](#), and other applicable legislation, including municipal by-laws and [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#).

COVID-19 transmission

Current evidence indicates that COVID-19 is spread mainly from person-to-person through the respiratory droplets of someone with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres (six feet) through coughing, sneezing or talking. COVID-19 can also be transmitted when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes. Cases of COVID-19 variants of concern are rising in Halton Region and provincially. Variants of concern (VOCs) are strains of COVID-19 that are more transmissible, cause more severe illness, and may be less susceptible to protection from currently available vaccines. It is possible that you can still transmit the virus even after receiving your vaccine, therefore those that have been vaccinated must continue to follow public health measures.

COVID-19 Response Framework Requirements

Ontario's [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#) outlines a graduated approach that allows for public health measures to be introduced and removed incrementally. Each region is placed in one of five levels (Prevent, Protect, Restrict, Control and Lockdown) by the Provincial Government, based on defined criteria. Residents, businesses and organizations must follow the public health measures for their region's level.

Halton Region is currently in the **Control (Red) level** of the framework. Owners and operators of indoor dining establishments including restaurants, bars, food courts, concession stands and other food and drink establishments must follow the requirements listed below:

Red - CONTROL

General Requirements

- Indoor/outdoor dining, take out, drive through, and delivery are permitted.

- All people who are seated together at a table in the establishment must be members of the same household, a member of one other household who lives alone or a caregiver for any member of either household.
- Patrons must remain seated unless placing, picking up an order, paying, using the restroom, arriving/departing, or lining up to do these activities.
- Establishments must manage line-ups and congregation of patrons outside of the establishment to ensure that all patrons maintain a minimum physical distance of two metres (six feet) and that non-medical masks or face coverings are worn, unless exempt.

Capacity Limits

- Total number of patrons permitted to be seated indoors must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the establishment, and cannot exceed the lesser of:
 - 50 patrons, and
 - 50 per cent capacity
- There are no outdoor capacity limits provided a physical distance of two meters (six feet) is maintained.
- Signage must be posted visible to the public that states the maximum capacity they are permitted to operate under.

Hours of Operation

- All food and drink establishments (except those within hospitals or airports) must be closed to the public between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. except to allow patrons to place/pick-up a takeout order, provide drive-through or delivery service, provide access to washrooms or dine-in service only for staff.
- Liquor may only be sold or served between 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- Consumption of liquor is not permitted between 10 p.m. to 9 a.m.

Active Screening

- Actively screen patrons before entering using the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Patrons\)](#).
- Every worker, supplier and other person(s) who work in the establishment must be actively screened before coming to work using the online [COVID-19 Worker and Employee Screening](#) or [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Workers\)](#).

Physical Distancing

- A minimum of two metres (six feet) must be kept between patrons at separate tables or are separated by plexiglas or other impermeable barrier.
- If there is no plexiglas or other impermeable barrier, establishments must calculate the minimum 2 metre distance between dining spaces from the most outward part on all sides, (i.e., the most outward part of the chair with someone seated at it, to the most outward part of another adjacent chair).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Non-medical masks or face coverings are required by all staff and patrons except when eating or drinking indoors.
- Personal protective equipment, including eye protection, must be worn by staff when within two metres (six feet) of patrons who are not wearing a non-medical mask or face-covering.

Collection of Patron Information

- Contact information must be collected from every patron that enters an indoor or outdoor dining area, unless the patron temporarily enters the area to place, pick-up or pay for a takeout order.

- [Patron logs](#) must be securely stored for a minimum of one month and then destroyed in a secure manner to preserve the privacy of patrons.
- Upon request, patron logs must be provided by email or fax to Halton Region Public Health within **two hours** of a request.

Additional Requirements

- Buffet-style service is not permitted.
- Dancing, singing and live music performances are prohibited.
- Strip clubs and night clubs are only permitted to operate as a restaurant or bar.
- Music must be no louder than the volume of a normal conversation and loud talking, singing or shouting must not be encouraged. Microphones are required if instructors need to raise their voice.
- A [safety plan](#) must be available upon request.

Additional COVID-19 Public Health Measures

The following COVID-19 Public Health Measures are recommended by Halton Region Public Health and should be considered in all levels of Ontario's [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#).

Screen for COVID-19 symptoms

- All businesses and organizations must post signs at all entrances that inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 symptoms using [COVID-19 Signage Questions for Businesses and Organizations](#).
- As required (see Provincial Framework table above):
 - Staff must be actively screened before coming to work using the online [COVID-19 Worker and Employee Screening](#) or [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Workers\)](#).
 - Patrons must be actively screened before entering the premises using the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Patrons\)](#).
 - If a staff member or patron answers “yes” to a screening question and/or they develop [symptoms](#), direct them to:
 - stay home or return home to [self-isolate](#); and
 - contact their health care provider or book an appointment at a local [Assessment Centre](#) for testing.
 - Workers conducting screening, including performing temperature checks or administering screening questions to others, should be behind a physical barrier or stand at least two metres (six feet) from others. If this is not possible, workers should wear a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection.
 - As per [instructions from the Medical Officer of Health](#), [maintain a log](#) of the people who enter the premises to assist with contact tracing if needed. The following information must be collected and recorded from every patron upon entry unless the patron temporarily enters the area to place, pick-up or pay for a takeout order.:
 - First and last name;
 - Telephone number and municipality of residence; and if possible, email or mailing address;
 - Attendance details: date; arrival time; table number or location; and departure time (recorded on departure);
 - The results of the active screening (i.e., confirmation that screening was completed and the patron passed screening;

- Verbal attestation that the patron will be seated:
 - i. At a table only with their own household members, with or without one other person who lives alone or a caregiver;
 - ii. At a table only with one other household, if they live alone; or
 - iii. At a table with another household, if they are a caregiver (essential for maintaining mental or physical health) for someone in that household.
 - The log must comply with privacy requirements and be kept confidential. Display a [poster](#) informing customers that their name and contact information will be collected.
 - Upon request, patron logs must be provided by email or fax to Halton Region Public Health within **two hours** of a request.

Maximize physical distancing

- Ensure that a minimum distance of at least two metres (six feet) is kept between people who are not from the same household, including at entrances/exits and in washrooms.
- Implement a reservation system to avoid lines of waiting customers.
- Ensure that lines of waiting customers are not close to seated customers and use ground markings (floor decals or tape markings) to encourage physical distancing.
- Mark direction of travel to designate entrances, exits and washrooms.

Reduce physical contact

- Do not pre-set tables; utensils should be rolled or packaged.
- Use single-use paper menus, electronic menus, menu-boards, or chalkboards, instead of regular menus.
- Avoid shared table items (for example, condiment bottles and salt and pepper shakers). Consider using single-serve versions.
- Encourage the use of contactless payments whenever possible. If handling cash, use alcohol-based hand rub after each transaction and avoid touching your face.
- Consider installing Plexiglas or other transparent barriers in areas where there will be close contact between people (for example, Plexiglas at the host stand).

Keep hands and surfaces clean

- Post [signage](#) to encourage people to wash hands frequently for at least 15 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub. Washing with soap and water is preferred if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide adequate hand hygiene supplies, including alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub stations at entrances, exits, server stations and in washrooms.
- Use paper towel dispensers instead of hand dryers in washrooms where hands-free taps are not available in order to prevent recontamination of hands when turning off taps.
- Provide tissues and no touch waste receptacles to encourage respiratory etiquette.
- Conduct frequent [cleaning and disinfection](#) of all high touch surfaces and common areas including:
 - door handles, light switches, table tops, chairs, sneeze guards, faucets, restrooms, touch screens and dispensers
 - shared equipment such as credit/debit card machines and cash registers
- Operator should use disinfectant products with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and follow manufacturer's instructions for use.

- Consider installing devices such as automatic doors and electronic taps to prevent the need for frequent touching.
- Refer to COVID-19 [Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#) for further guidance on safely maintaining washrooms used by the public.

Non-medical masks or face coverings

- [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) and [Ontario's COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#) requires individuals to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in indoor public spaces, unless exempt.
- Non-medical masks or face coverings should also be worn in other situations (for example, outdoors) when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks can be removed when eating or drinking.
- Train staff on the [proper use](#), removal and disposal of non-medical masks.
- Non-medical masks do not replace other important public health measures, such as physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve and staying home when feeling ill.

Outdoor dining

- Outdoor dining occurs in a completely or largely open-air space, as compared to indoor dining, which occurs in a fully or largely enclosed place.
 - If the outdoor dining area is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning or other element, at least two full sides of the outdoor dining area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
 - If the outdoor dining area is equipped with a retractable roof and the roof is retracted, at least one full side of the outdoor dining area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- Fully covered and enclosed spaces are not considered outdoor dining areas. They do not allow for adequate airflow and could increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Owners of food premise establishments must work with their local municipality and fire department for necessary permits and approvals related to outdoor dining areas and structures to ensure all other safety requirements are met.

Employee health and safety

- Use the provincial [screening tool for workplaces](#) to actively screen staff before each shift. If a staff member screens positive and/or if they develop [symptoms](#), direct them to:
 - stay home or return home to [self-isolate](#); and
 - contact their health care provider or book an appointment at a local [Assessment Centre](#) for testing.
- Ensure [appropriate personal protective equipment](#) is available on-site for staff at all times and all staff are trained on [proper use](#).
- Maintain flexible policies to allow staff to stay home to care for a sick family member or self-isolate if required.
- In the event that a staff member tests positive for COVID-19, follow the direction outlined in [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Managing COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace](#).
- Educate staff on public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including physical distancing, proper frequent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and cleaning and disinfection.
- Encourage physical distancing among staff.
- Place a capacity limit on the entrance to break rooms.

- Operator to offer hand sanitizer at the entrance and exits to lunch rooms.
- Operator to ensure sanitizer is available for cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
 - Stagger staff work schedules, breaks and meal times.
 - Reconfigure breakrooms and eating areas to ensure staff can maintain appropriate physical distancing.
 - Rearrange equipment and/or processes in the kitchen and other areas only used by staff so that a two metre (six feet) distance is achievable at all times (this may involve removing surplus equipment and furniture).
 - When physical distancing cannot be maintained, [personal protective equipment](#) must be worn by staff.

Additional Resources

- Halton Region Public Health
 - [Mental Health Resources and Supports](#)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Managing COVID-19 Cases in the Workplace](#)
 - [Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#)
- Government of Ontario
 - [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 3).
 - [Ontario Regulation 263/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 2).
 - [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for Areas in Stage 1).
- Ministry of Health
 - [Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises](#)
 - [Restaurant and food services health and safety during COVID-19](#)
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
 - [Tip sheet: restaurants and food service](#)
 - [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services
 - [Guidance on health and safety for restaurant servers, cooks and dishwashers during COVID-19](#)
 - [Psychological Safety Resources for Leaders During COVID-19](#)

More information

For more information and updates, visit [halton.ca/COVID19](https://www.halton.ca/COVID19) or call 311. For specific questions about COVID-19 provincial regulations, please contact the **Stop the Spread Business Information Line** at 1-888-444-3659.