

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

Updated November 13, 2020

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. 364/20](#) (regulations for Prevent, Protect, Restrict, and Control levels) and [O. Reg. 263/20](#) (regulations for the Control level).

Owners and operators must ensure measures are in place to keep staff and visitors safe from COVID-19, while ensuring compliance with the requirements of [Ontario Regulation 493/17: Food Premises](#), and other applicable legislation, including the [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.

## 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 (green), Protect (yellow), Restrict (orange), Control (red) and Lockdown (grey) by the provincial government, based on defined criteria. Residents, businesses and organizations must follow the public health measures for their region's level. See [O. Reg. 364/20](#) (regulations for Prevent, Protect, Restrict, Control levels) and [O. Reg. 263/20](#) (regulations for the Control level) for details about the public health measures. Visit [halton.ca/COVID19](http://halton.ca/COVID19) for updates on Halton Region's level.

**Please note:** The measures are cumulative. For example, if a public health unit region is placed in the Restrict level, in addition to the Restrict measures, the measures for lower levels (Protect and Prevent) must also be followed.

### First Level: PREVENT

- Patrons must remain seated unless placing, picking up an order, paying, using the restroom, arriving/departing, or lining up to do these activities.
- A minimum of two metres (six feet) must be kept between patrons at separate tables or are separated by a Plexiglas or other impermeable barrier.
- 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.
- Contact information must be collected from patrons (one per group) that enters an indoor or outdoor dining area, with exceptions for patrons who temporarily enter the area to place, pick-up or pay for a takeout order.
- Non-medical masks or face coverings are required by all staff and patrons except when eating or drinking indoors.

- 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.
- All staff must be screened before coming to work using the Provincial [screening tool for workplaces](#).
- Buffet-style service is not permitted.
- Dancing, singing and live music is permitted by hired performers, with restrictions.
- Karaoke is permitted, with restrictions including no private rooms.
- Night clubs are only permitted to operate as restaurant or bar.

## Second Level: PROTECT

Measures from the previous level and:

- All food and drink establishments must be closed to the public between 12 a.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 11 p.m.
- Consumption of liquor is not permitted between 12 a.m. to 9 a.m.
- 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.
- No more than **six people** may be seated together.
- Music must be no louder than the volume of a normal conversation.
- A [safety plan](#) must be available upon request.

## Third Level: RESTRICT

Measures from the previous level and:

- An indoor capacity limit of 50 people must be followed.
- All food and drink establishments 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.
- All patrons must be screened before entering by asking if they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#), have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days, or have had close contact with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19.
- No more than **four people** may be seated together.
- Strip clubs must be closed.

## Fourth Level: CONTROL

Measures from the previous level and:

- An indoor capacity limit of 10 people must be followed.
- Outdoor dining, take out, drive through, and delivery are permitted (see Outdoor Dining section below).
- Dancing, singing and the live performance of brass or wind instruments are prohibited.

## 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 patrons for COVID-19 symptoms

- Display [posters](#) informing customers that they should only enter the establishment if they do not have COVID-19 symptoms.
- If feasible or when required:
  - actively screen patrons when booking reservations and prior to entry by asking if they have COVID-19, COVID [symptoms](#), have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days and are not [exempt](#) from travel restrictions, or have had close contact with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19.
  - [maintain a log](#) of patron names and contact information, with date, check-in and check-out times and the table number for a minimum of 30 days to support contact tracing by public health if there is a case of COVID-19. Display a [poster](#) informing customers that their name and contact information will be collected.

## 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.
- Encourage patrons to only dine indoors with members of their household.
- When arranging the dining space, position chairs to be at least two metres (six feet) between patrons seated at different tables, unless they can be separated by Plexiglas or another impermeable barrier, in order to ensure physical distancing.
- 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

- 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

- [Halton Region 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.
- At this time, Halton Region Public Health recommends that to be considered an outdoor dining area:
  - 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:
  - return or stay home;
  - contact their health care provider or book an appointment at a local [Assessment Centre](#) for testing; and
  - [self-isolate](#) at home.
- 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 employees to stay home to care for a sick family member or self-isolate if required.
- Educate employees 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:
  - 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

- 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).
- Ministry of Health
  - [COVID-19 Guidance for 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](#)
- Workplace Safety & Prevention Services
  - [Guidance on health and safety for restaurant servers, cooks and dishwashers during COVID-19](#)

## More information

For more information and updates, visit [halton.ca/COVID19](https://halton.ca/COVID19) or call 311.