



COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Retail Food Establishments

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. COVID-19 was first discovered in China in December of 2019, and the first case was reported in Arkansas on March 11, 2020.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus primarily spreads via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person sneezes or coughs. These droplets can travel up to 6 feet. It may be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object with the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly eyes, however this is not believed to be the main way the virus spreads.

It is believed there is a low risk of spread through food. However, due to the close contact that occurs between customers and staff at a retail food establishment, you should be proactive in preventing the spread of this illness.

What are the symptoms?

Illnesses can be mild, or in some cases, can be severe enough to require hospitalization. Symptoms of COVID-19 can include fever, cough, shortness of breath, bluish lips or face, and/or new confusion. Severe complications can include pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and, in some cases, death. For more symptoms:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/symptoms.html>

How can transmission of COVID-19 be prevented in my restaurant?

The best way to prevent transmission is to avoid coming into contact with the virus. Therefore, you should ensure you and your staff:

- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay home if you are sick or have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Clean and sanitize surfaces that are frequently touched (counters, doorknobs, toilets, phones, etc.). Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogen claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for these products. For a list of EPA-approved emerging pathogen sanitizers:
<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- Food contact surfaces should be sanitized in accordance with §4-501.114 of the [Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments](#).
- Non-food contact surfaces may be sanitized with 1/2 cup of regular, unscented bleach per gallon of water followed by a 5-minute contact time.
- Provide the customer additional napkins or tissues to use when they cough or sneeze.

What do I do if an employee shows symptoms of a fever and cough in my retail food facility?

In addition to excluding employees who have symptoms as noted in §2-201.11 of the [Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments](#), you should exclude any employee who has a fever and cough.

I know the Secretary of Health Directive on 3/20/20 has closed dining areas and allows carry-out and delivery of foods, but would outdoor dining areas be allowed?

The intent of the directive is to limit close personal contact, so we can limit the spread of COVID-19; therefore, outdoor dining areas should also be closed until the Secretary of Health Directive is lifted.

I have a salad bar/buffet type restaurant where customers serve themselves. Are customers allowed to fill their own containers for take-out?

In an effort to restrict close personal contact and limit the spread of COVID-19, salad bars and buffet type restaurants should restrict customer access to salad bars/buffets. An employee may fill customers' orders from a salad bar/buffet.

What can I do to protect customers who come to my restaurant to pick up a carry-out order?

The spread of COVID-19 occurs when people are in close contact (less than 6 feet). Some recommended actions include:

- Clean and sanitize any objects or surfaces that the customer may have touched.
- Make sure an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is available for customers.

What do I do if one of my employees tests positive for or has been identified as being in close contact with a person who is positive for COVID-19?

The employee should be excluded from working in the facility until they are symptom free and have been cleared to return to work by their primary care physician and the Arkansas Department of Health.

The Arkansas Department of Health also recommends that the facility close temporarily to clean and sanitize all surfaces.

Additional Resources:

Arkansas Department of Health COVID-19 website:

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>



For More Information Contact:

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