

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services

Guidance on Health and Safety For Restaurant Servers, Cooks and Dishwashers during COVID-19

OVERVIEW

This is not a legal document and employers are advised to seek legal advice.

Employers and constructors have obligations to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations and the directives coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Workers should raise any concerns to their:

- supervisor
- joint health and safety committee
- health and safety representative

This will help ensure the employer has taken all reasonable precautions.

Ontario is currently in the midst of a global pandemic. While the COVID-19 situation is changing rapidly, the legislation and regulations used to govern Ontario's workplaces are not.

Under Ontario law, employers have the duty to keep workers and work sites safe and free of hazards. Workers have the right to refuse unsafe work. If health and safety concerns are not resolved internally, a worker can seek enforcement by filing a complaint with the ministry's Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008. Failure of the employer or constructor to comply with the OHSA and its regulations could result in a stop-work order upon inspection by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

BEST PRACTICES

We know that every workplace is unique. That makes it so important that every workplace assess functions carried out by their workforce to ensure they take action to protect against hazards presented by COVID-19.

Things like practicing physical distancing (staying 2 metres away from others) minimizing contact with droplets, keeping surfaces and objects clean, and preventing contact with potentially infected people –these are all critically important measures. Other information on how you can protect yourself is available on ontario.ca/coronavirus.

We have provided some protection advice below for your consideration. Please keep in mind that introducing any new protective measures should be done as part of a full review of other workplace hazards -- not just COVID 19 alone. Employers should consult with Joint Health and Safety Committees/Health and Safety Representatives in the workplace on measures to protect workers in the workplace. We want to ensure we enhance our safety, not cause other issues.

Some workplaces already have some existing controls in place that may help reduce the risk of exposure to workers as well, so regular 'check-ins' on how controls are helping is highly recommended.

RECOGNIZE HAZARDS/ASSESS RISKS

For cooks, dishwashers and servers, we recognize that you will have contact with co-workers and customers, as well as surfaces, such as counters, containers and money, as you go about your work. You could potentially come in contact with droplets from these interactions.

Take a look at where you might minimize those risks within your workplace. Consult [public health information](#) to learn the symptoms of COVID-19 infection. Recognize and report these hazards and use appropriate controls. Ensure that you or your co-workers stay home if symptomatic.

We understand – so it's important to take a look at where you can possibly minimize those risks within your workplace. Take a look at the controls below to see how they may assist you.

CONTROLS

To protect yourself from some of these hazards consider the following options:

- Consider tasks that can be minimized or eliminated. For example, payment be cashless with transactions by debit, credit or e-transfer
- Minimize contact with customers and maintain a safe distance of at least 2 metres while handling goods or taking payments. For example, require phone in ordering, and pick up at curbside or on an interior table at a scheduled time or on customer call notifying of arrival?
- Can you control and limit the number of people in a workspace at one time? Consider limiting the number of access doors and people allowed inside. Consider floor markings to show distance (2 metres) to be kept apart and the desired direction of people flow.
- Can you put barriers in place between yourself and the people or product you have to interact with? For example, only working through a drive-thru window with open/close capability between interactions or using a 'sneeze guard'.
- Can you improve fresh air intake/air circulation with open doors and windows or fans? Increased airflow may reduce contaminant build up.
- Increase your cleaning frequency on commonly touched surfaces like serving counters, PIN pads, cash drawers, door handles, dispensers and water taps. Be sure to follow safe practices and use an appropriate cleaning agent. Public Health Ontario offers more information on [cleaning and disinfection](#) protocols.
- Consider job rotation. Have fewer workers doing the same task in the same space.
- Use [good hand washing technique](#) and avoid touching your face. Extra handwashing is a good idea for everyone – and when that's not possible, a hand sanitizer with minimum alcohol content of 60% should be used frequently. Consider disinfecting after each order or each customer interaction.
- Ensure that measures you decide on are communicated clearly to workers.
- The Government of Canada has more information about [food handling safety and COVID-19](#).

If the above recommendations are still not enough for your workplace, as a last resort, consider Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). PPE is only effective if people wear it correctly. Workers need to be trained in the fit, use, storage, cleaning, maintenance and limitations of the PPE that they wear.

Some examples of PPE that may be suited to cooks, dishwashers and servers work include:

- Overcoats – ensure disposal is appropriate or that laundering instructions are being followed.
- Gloves – single use gloves can help limit contact with surfaces, product etc. Be sure you have practices set up for suitable change or disposal of gloves. It's also important to consider other hazards that may be present in the workplace before introducing gloves – in some cases, gloves can be an 'entanglement' hazard and should not be worn.
- Goggles or Face Shields – can help create a barrier and separation too. They should be assigned to individuals and not shared and can be reused regularly if kept clean. Ensure the goggle or face shield use does not result in workers touching their faces more often because of heat or discomfort.

EVALUATION

COVID 19 has presented all of us with challenges we have never seen before. It's important to consider that any of the adjustments we are making today, may need further adjustment tomorrow.

It is recommended that you take a look at your preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and adjust them if they are not working well enough or causing other issues with your work. For example, if you decided to use goggles, but they are fogging up and making other tasks unnecessarily difficult, you may want to try a face shield instead. Or if you decided you needed a certain kind of disinfectant and it's no longer available, switching to good soap and water practices may be a reasonable substitute.

Bottom line? Plan to make regular check-ins part of *your* COVID 19 prevention plans.

For anyone who thinks they may have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please start by visiting the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website and taking a self-assessment: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/selfassessment/#q0>. Please do not visit an assessment center unless you have been referred by a health care professional. Do not call 911 unless it is an emergency.

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates on COVID-19:

[Government of Ontario](#)

[Government of Canada](#)

[Public Health Ontario](#)

For more information visit www.wsps.ca/COVID19

NOTE: This document is intended for informational purposes only to provide an overview of the potential hazards posed in the workplace due to COVID-19. It is not intended as medical advice, to provide a comprehensive risk assessment for all workplaces, or to replace any legislated workplace safety obligations. Due to the ongoing evolution of the situation in Ontario and around the world, this document may be used as a guide for Employers in addition to guidance delivered by public health authorities such as the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Ontario Ministry of Health](#), [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#). Any use which is made of this document by any Employer, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of the Employer. WSPS and its partners, officers, directors, employees, agents, representatives, suppliers and service providers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions in content or for damages of any kind or nature suffered by any Employer or any third party as a result of use of or reliance on this communication.