

Food News

Coping with coronavirus - recommendations for food businesses

Recommendations for food businesses build on many tasks that should already be in place such as cleaning and sanitizing.

COVID-19

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

The best available guidance for avoiding COVID-19 is to take the same precautions you take for avoiding colds and flu:

- **Wash your hands** thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Find a [handwashing poster](#) in 14 languages on the Minnesota Department of Health website. Also find videos that demonstrate proper handwashing in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Somali](#) and [Hmong](#).
- **Cover your cough and sneeze.** Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands. Find a [Cover your cough poster](#) in 17 languages on the Minnesota Department of Health website.
- **Avoid touching your face** with unwashed hands.
- **Stay home when you're sick.**
- **Stay informed.** Visit the [Minnesota Department of Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) websites.
- **Learn more about [Sick and Safe Time](#).** Sick and safe time is a law in Minneapolis protecting time off work.

Businesses

- Businesses should focus on employee personal hygiene, including proper handwashing, and cleaning and sanitizing.
- Be sure your restrooms are stocked with soap and paper towels. Proper handwashing with soap is better than using hand sanitizer.
- Have tissues and hand sanitizer available for customers. Hand sanitizer should have 60% or more alcohol.
- Clean and sanitize all surfaces frequently touched by customers or employees. This includes items such as menus, condiment dispensers, salt and pepper shakers, buffet serving utensils, tables, doorknobs, light switches, faucets, point-of-sale systems, keyboards, telephones, beverage machines, buzzer-pagers, etc.
- Review your cleaning and sanitizing procedures.
- Inform your customers what you are doing to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus.

- Think about what you would need to do to continue operating if the virus spreads. Do you have online ordering? Food delivery? Could you operate on a take-out basis?

Sanitizing

- Use sanitizing compound in water to wipe down tables. Make sure your sanitizer is properly mixed by checking the concentration with your test kit.
- When the water gets dirty or the concentration of the sanitizer drops, change the wiping cloth and replace the sanitizing solution.

Cleaning

- Employees, cleaning staff and others should wash hands often including immediately before putting on gloves and again after removing gloves.
- Employees and cleaning staff should wear disposable gloves for all cleaning tasks, including handling trash.
- Gloves should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
- Consider using a cleaning product with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims. The American Chemistry Council maintains a list of these products: [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)-Fighting Products \(PDF\) \(https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf\)](https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf).
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (for example, concentration, application method, contact time, and use of personal protective equipment). Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the product including precautions you should take when applying the product.

Linens – tablecloths, napkins, uniforms

- Employees handling dirty laundry should wear gloves.
- Do not shake dirty laundry. This minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
- Launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting (following manufacturer's instructions).
- Dry items completely.
- Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance for hard or soft surfaces.

If a customer is suspected of being sick

- After customer leaves, clean and sanitize items the customer touched. The employee doing cleaning should wear gloves and wash their hands immediately after removing the gloves.

If one of your employees becomes ill with COVID-19

- Develop a protocol if an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Use your [Minneapolis Employee illness log](#) (PDF).
- Make sure employees know your sick time policy and about their rights under the [Minneapolis Sick and Safe time ordinance](#).
- Refer to the [Sick and Safe time for food businesses flyer](#).

- If a staff member has a sick family member, the staff member should contact the Minnesota Department of Health to determine if it is ok to go to work.
- Communicate to employees.

Remember, [viruses don't discriminate and neither should we](#). (PDF)

You can find more information in a list of [frequently asked questions](#).

If you have questions, contact research.health@minneapolismn.gov or call the Minnesota Department of Health hotline at 651-201-3920. The hotline is answered Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Fake health inspector alert

Be on the alert for someone posing as a health inspector.

Someone posing as a health inspector went to a food business in Anoka County. They told an employee the health department was planning to shut down all food service (apparently because of coronavirus). Fortunately, the person did not try to access the kitchen or any employee-restricted areas.

The business notified the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Minneapolis health inspectors introduce themselves at the beginning of an inspection. All health inspectors have a City of Minneapolis picture identification card.

If someone tells you they are a Minneapolis Health Inspector, ask to see their identification. If they cannot show you a City of Minneapolis identification, or if you suspect the identification is fake, do not let them into your business.

Call 311 (612-673-3000) and ask to speak with an Environmental Health supervisor. The supervisor will tell you if the health inspector is a City of Minneapolis Health Inspector.

Protecting public health for over 150 years.

About this newsletter: Environmental Health eNews is published by the City of Minneapolis Environmental Health. If you have questions, please contact Minneapolis311@minneapolismn.gov.

For reasonable accommodations or alternative formats please contact Leslie Foreman in the Minneapolis Health Department at 612-673-2301 or health@minneapolismn.gov. People who are deaf or hard of hearing can use a relay service to call 311 agents at 612-673-3000. TTY users can call 612-673-2157 or 612-673-2626.

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