

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

FOR FOOD REGULATORS

On March 16, 2020, Gov. Eric J. Holcomb issued [Executive Order 20-04](#) announcing restaurants, bars, nightclubs and other establishments that provide in-dining services to close to in-person patrons through March 31, 2020. This was extended until April 20 through [Executive Order 20-18](#) and now includes not only interior dining areas, but also patios, outdoor seating areas and parking lots. The intent of the executive order is to keep people from congregating in a dining area. Retail food establishments may allow people to walk in to pick up food or have employees bring an order out to a vehicle. Lines of customers waiting for a takeout order should be discouraged and could be addressed by signage or employees promoting social distancing (staying at least six feet apart and/or no more than 10 people at a time). Jurisdictions and food businesses should work together to decide the most effective way to implement this executive order. Implementation should also take into consideration disease activity within the community.

Food industry is a part of the nation's critical infrastructure and food regulatory professionals should work with food industry partners to ensure they are able to remain in operation while adhering to the Governor's executive order. Information is rapidly evolving in regards to COVID-19 and information in this document may be subject to change.

CAN COVID-19 BE SPREAD THROUGH FOOD OR FRESH PRODUCE?

The CDC, FDA, and ISDH are not aware of any reports at this time of human illnesses that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging. However, it is always important to follow good hygiene practices (i.e., wash hands and surfaces often, separate raw meat from other foods, cook to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods promptly) when handling or preparing foods.

As consumers select their produce, adhering to food safety guidance is critical. We encourage consumers to wash their hands, and wash and prepare their produce following FDA recommendations.

Farmers markets are considered essential and are permitted to continue operations under Gov. Eric J. Holcomb's executive order. Specifically, the order designates "certified farmers markets" as essential businesses. Operators are encouraged to follow the CDC guidance for social distancing of six feet.

FOOD EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Educate food employees on the symptoms of COVID-19 to include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Educate employees on good respiratory hygiene to include hand washing, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoid touching the face, nose, or mouth. Follow CDC guidelines on home isolation for food employees who are COVID-19 cases, contacts, or when exhibiting respiratory symptoms. When a food employee is positive for COVID-19, management should consult with the local health department, food regulatory authority, or ISDH for guidance.

- All food employees should monitor for symptoms of fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. Food employees should notify management of symptoms, exposure to COVID-19 cases, or if they were diagnosed with COVID-19.
- COVID-19 cases will be excluded until 72 hours after fever has subsided (without use of a fever reducer), when other symptoms have improved (cough or shortness of breath), and at least 7 days after symptoms appeared.
- Exclude contacts of COVID-19 cases for 14 days from last exposure. Contacts should stay home and monitor for symptoms. Contact your local health department or ISDH for guidance on close contact exclusion.
- Food employees should stay at home when experiencing respiratory symptoms and should only return to work when they are no longer experiencing symptoms.

There are no approved vaccines or anti-viral drugs for COVID-19. Employees who have recently traveled in affected areas, are symptomatic, or were around people suffering from respiratory infections should immediately contact a health professional for instructions.

Public health officials also say that asymptomatic infections, are highly probable and asymptomatic individuals may still be actively shedding the virus. Therefore, practicing social distancing, good sanitization of food contact surfaces, and disinfection of high touch surfaces is important.

HOW ELSE MAY FOOD ESTABLISHMENT MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES PREVENT THE SPREAD OF DISEASE?

Ensure that food employees also practice social distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals. Voluntary use of simple cloth face coverings as a public health measure can be utilized in food facilities. However, ensure that cloth face coverings are laundered and maintained in accordance with FDA regulations.

Food contact surfaces should continue to be cleaned and sanitized as before using hot water or chemical sanitizer that have already been approved for use. High touch point surfaces (door knobs, light switches, toilets, and sinks etc.) that are not food contact surfaces can be cleaned and disinfected with EPA recommended disinfectants in the proportions stated on the label. Ensure dishwasher and/or three-compartment sinks are used properly and contain the appropriate level of sanitizer and/or water temperature for the final rinse. Maintain adequate supplies of gloves, hand soap and hand sanitizers, sanitizers and disinfectants, and other PPE (if employees choose to wear masks). Order more if needed (without over-ordering).

Until told otherwise, restrict dine-in and only offer food to patrons using drive thru, take-out, and delivery services. For establishments allowing take-out, restrict consumer self-service options like buffets, salad bars, unpackaged food displays (hot dog rollers, donuts etc.) and unpackaged utensils. Retail food establishments should limit the number of customers in their establishment at any given time to adhere to the CDC's social distancing guidelines to protect both their employees and the public.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE IN THE EVENT OF A BODY FLUID INCIDENT?

If a customer or employee vomits or has diarrhea, implement the same protocols used for Norovirus. Provide personal protective equipment and have the supplies needed for cleanup, including an approved disinfectant effective against viruses. The CDC recommends 1/3 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water for environmental cleaning after an incident.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FOOD PROGRAM AVAILABILITY

The USDA is monitoring the COVID-19 situation closely in collaboration with federal and state partners. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service programs are ready to assist in the government-wide effort to ensure all Americans have access to food in times of need. In the event of an emergency or disaster situation, Food and Nutrition Service programs are just one part of a much larger government-wide coordinated response. All programs, including SNAP, WIC and the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, have flexibilities and contingencies built-in to allow the response to on-the-ground realities and take action as directed by Congress.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

General questions from the public or healthcare provider inquiries about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (available 8 a.m. to midnight).

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>
- CDC guidelines for COVID-19 cases, contacts, or when exhibiting respiratory symptoms: (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>).
- FDA Food Safety and COVID-19: <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-during-emergencies/food-safety-and-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>. FDA COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/mcm-issues/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>
- USDA COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.usda.gov/coronavirus>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>
- ISDH Guidance for Essential Businesses: https://coronavirus.in.gov/files/IN-COVID-19_Occupational%20Guidance%204.1.20.pdf (English) and https://coronavirus.in.gov/files/IN-COVID-19_Occupational%20Guidance%204.1.20_completada.pdf (Spanish)
- U.S. EPA Registered Antimicrobial Products for Use Against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, the Cause of COVID-19: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>
- Workplace complaints related to COVID-19: <https://www.in.gov/dol/3144.htm>