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 or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting and diarrhea. 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 AND FOOD INDUSTRY

On May 22, 2020, Gov. Eric J. Holcomb’s Executive Order 20-28 became effective and announced that all Indiana counties (except Cass, Lake, and Marion Counties) may transition to Stage 3. On June 1, 2020, Marion, Lake, and Cass Counties may advance to Stage 3.

Food industry such as restaurants, other retail food establishments, and food manufacturing firms shall plan and then implement measures to ensure a safe environment for employees, customers, clients, and members. The plan should be posted publicly and include the following.

- An employee health screening process.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting process to include high touch surfaces.
- Enhanced hand washing and personal hygiene measures.
- Compliance with employees adhering to social distancing of at least 6 feet apart. Employing other separation measures such as face coverings or using barriers to separate employees.

Restaurants, including country clubs, social clubs, and wineries which provide in-person full dining service, are permitted to open, reopen, or expand services. Restaurants shall comply with the following:

- In-person or on-premises dining is limited to no more than 50% of seating capacity in any segregated or separate dining area of the facility to ensure social distancing requirements are met and with reservations being required when practicable. Seating capacity is determined at the local level. Food regulators may contact local building/fire department officials to determine seating capacity.
- Bar areas in restaurants shall remain closed. Bars that have a full service kitchen and a full menu can operate as a restaurant as long as the bar is closed and they comply with Executive Order 20-28 requirements.
- Bars and taverns shall remain closed.
- Tables or available booths should be spaced at least 6 feet apart and parties should be 6 persons or fewer per table. Staff and patrons should adhere to social distancing of at least 6 feet apart. All employees and staff shall wear face coverings.
- All employees and staff shall be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before being allowed to work. All ill employees shall be excluded from working while ill.

- Self-service food stations (buffets, salad bars, etc.) are not permitted. Self-service beverage stations are permitted provided cups, lids, and straws are supplied by waitstaff. Patrons may not use or fill their own personal cups, mugs, or glasses. Furthermore, refills are prohibited.

- Live music or live entertainment is not permitted.

Other Retail Food Establishments other than restaurants, include businesses such as convenience stores, gas stations, and grocery stores.

- Self-service beverage stations are permitted provided cups, lids, and straws are supplied by employees. Patrons may not use or fill their own personal cups, mugs, or glasses. Furthermore, refills are prohibited.

- Self-service food stations offering unpackaged food items such as a salad bar, olive bar, bulk item, or hot dog roller/grill must be accessible by patrons using disposable tissues or other single-use serving item. However, this requirement does not apply to general produce sections or stands in retail food establishments.

- Face coverings are highly recommended for employees and other retail food establishments should consider offering or requesting that face coverings be used by customers.

- Retail businesses shall comply with social distancing or other separation measures, sanitation of applicable areas, and other mitigation measures to protect its employees and the public.

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. Food Industry should be prepared to change business practices, if needed, in order to maintain critical operations. 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 cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell. 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 or ISDH for guidance.

- All food employees should monitor for symptoms of cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell. Food employees should notify management of symptoms, exposure to COVID-19 cases, or if they were diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Promptly separate employees who appear to be experiencing acute respiratory illness symptoms from other employees and send home immediately.
- 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 10 days after symptoms appeared.
- Food employees should stay at home when experiencing respiratory symptoms and should only return to work when they are no longer experiencing symptoms.

Currently, 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. The 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.

All food businesses should ensure that sick policies are up to date, flexible, and non-punitive to allow sick employees to stay home and care for themselves, children or other family members. Reinforce key messages to all employees regularly (to stay home when sick, use cough and sneeze etiquette, and practice hand hygiene), and place posters where they will be likely to be seen.

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. Order more if needed (without over-ordering).

**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.
COVID-19 Food Safety Guidelines

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

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 (8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily).

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

- 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