

Guide to workplace health standards for the  
restaurant and bar industry - COVID-19

## Occupational health and safety is a shared responsibility!



This guide was prepared to help establishments in the restaurant and bar industry manage occupational health and safety issues in the workplace. It also aims to ensure that restaurants and bars can resume or continue their activities in the safest possible manner, i.e., by taking measures to address various issues specific to the COVID-19 pandemic. Activities in this sector are gradually resuming, and a [list of activities](#) now authorized by the Government of Québec has been prepared.

During a crisis such as this one, employees, employers and other industry actors must work together to ensure safe and healthy workplaces for everyone. Doing so will call for conversation and cooperation.



### Occupational health and safety management

Occupational health and safety management requires that employers implement the measures required to meet their legal obligations, i.e., controlling and mitigating risks, while also promoting employee compliance.

Effective occupational health and safety management requires ongoing cooperation between an employer and its personnel.



The employer must identify the risks of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace. Should the elimination of all risks of contamination prove impossible, the employer must attempt to control and mitigate these risks. Activities that could pose a risk of exposure for employees must be identified, and suppliers, subcontractors, partners and customers must be notified of the preventive measures introduced by the establishment in accordance with public health guidelines, as well as of the importance of complying.

Preventive measures that can be introduced include the exclusion of symptomatic individuals from the workplace, physical distancing, adhering to appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and adopting good hygiene practices with regard to tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces.

Because of its impact in different societal and other areas, COVID-19 can be a major source of stress for employees, suppliers, subcontractors, partners and customers. Particular attention must be paid to people's psychological health.



### **Exclusion of symptomatic individuals from the workplace**

Persons with symptoms play a major role in the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace. Measures such as those described below - or that incorporate some of the following elements - could help stop the virus' transmission.

- Notification to all employees that they must not report to work should they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 (cough, fever, difficulty breathing, sudden loss of smell or taste with no accompanying nasal congestion).
- Identification of employees with COVID-19 symptoms prior to their entering the workplace. This can be done through:
  - a questionnaire;
  - employee self-evaluations.

All information gathered in this manner are confidential and the employer must take the measures required to ensure this confidentiality.

- Any person exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, as indicated on the [government Web site in this regard](#), must immediately be isolated. The person thus removed from the workplace will be invited to call 1 877 644-4545 for information on the steps to follow.
- Once the person with symptoms has left the area, access will be forbidden until such time as the room where the person was kept isolated has been cleaned and all surfaces and objects touched by the person have been disinfected.
- Employees who test positive for COVID-19 must notify their employer as per the instructions provided by public health authorities.
- The outcome of the public health investigation conducted will allow for determining whether those individuals who were in contact with a symptomatic employee can return to work or must isolate themselves.
- Customers who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms must be advised to postpone their planned outing at the establishment. Catering or private chef services must be postponed or cancelled if even one of the customers exhibits symptoms of COVID-19.



## Physical distancing

- Whenever possible, a distance of at least 2 metres from all other people must be maintained in the workplace, from the moment someone arrives until the time they leave.
- This physical distancing measure (2 metres) must also be observed during breaks and at lunchtime.
- Handshakes, hugs and all other types of physical contact must be avoided.

**Adjustments or modifications\* must be introduced to limit the risk of transmission** whenever physical distancing measures cannot be adhered to. Examples:

- Favouring the use of technology (e.g., teleworking for administrative tasks, menu planning and online payments, etc.).
- Erecting physical barriers (full and easily disinfected partitions) between workstations that are too close together and cannot be moved.
- Erecting physical barriers (full and easily disinfected partitions) to separate cashiers from customers as well as in front of open kitchen spaces, bars, front counters, the reception desk, etc.
- Making changes to the work organization. For example:
  - opting for the smallest possible teams composed of the same employees;
  - avoiding in-person group meetings;
  - refraining from sharing objects;
  - limiting outings and other movement to what is strictly necessary.
- Limiting the number of customers inside the establishment, as per applicable public health provisions. If necessary, an employee can be stationed outside the establishment or at the entrance to manage the waiting line.
- Advising all delivery personnel dropping off supplies to leave packages on a clean surface, in the presence of establishment personnel but without directly handing them over and while maintaining, whenever possible, the necessary physical distancing of 2 metres or more.
- Whenever possible, ensuring that people inside the establishment move in a same direction, thereby limiting face-to-face encounters.
- Setting up signs (e.g., marks on the floor) to indicate the necessary physical distancing (2 metres) near the cash register, front counter and cloakroom (i.e., anywhere customers could find themselves waiting in line or where a bottleneck could form).
- Clearly communicating all potentially useful information to customers with a sign at the establishment's entrance reiterating the rules, the manner in which services will be provided, the lineup process, accepted payment methods, takeout conditions and the process for ordering online or by telephone.

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If the workplace counts a health and safety committee member or prevention officer, this person shall be involved in all of the COVID-19 measures implemented.

- Advising suppliers, subcontractors, partners and customers of the measures introduced by the establishment to control risks associated with COVID-19 and increase awareness of the importance of complying.
- Providing procedure masks and eye protection (protective goggles/glasses or a full-face visor) and ensuring they are worn by all employees whose job requires that they be less than 2 metres from another person in the absence of physical barriers.

### Specific measures for restaurants and bars

- When serving customers (tableside, buffet or at the bar) where there are no physical barriers and the tasks involved call for being at a distance of less than 2 metres, employees must wear a procedure mask and eye protection (protective goggles/glasses or a full-face visor).
- When preparing food where there are no physical barriers and the tasks involved call for being less than 2 metres from one another, kitchen staff must wear a procedure mask and eye protection. If the temperature in the kitchen is sufficiently high to make it impossible to wear a procedure mask (that would be constantly wet), a full-face visor (covering the entire face, from forehead to chin) is recommended as a last resort.
- The necessary protective equipment, including procedure masks and eye protection (protective goggles/glasses or a full-face visor) must be provided for and adequate quantities made available to employees.
- The continuous wearing of protective equipment must be favoured over the repeated donning and doffing of masks, etc.
- Protective equipment must be removed in a safe manner. Single-use protective equipment must be discarded in a garbage can or by using sealable containers or bags earmarked for this purpose. Reusable protective equipment needs to be disinfected with a special product.
- The number of items exchanged with customers must be limited, possibly by using alternative methods such as touchscreen menus or menus on slates/blackboards.
- The equipment and devices used by most of the service personnel, including credit card readers, cash registers, touchscreens, headsets (for drivethrough service), and reusable plastic menus and trays, must be frequently cleaned and disinfected.



### Hand Hygiene

Employees must wash their hands frequently, with soap and warm water or a hydroalcoholic solution containing at least 60% alcohol, for at least 20 seconds. This measure, which limits the risks of transmission in the workplace, is particularly important:

- before touching one's face (eyes, nose, mouth).
- after coughing, sneezing or blowing one's nose;

- before and after eating;
- after handling a parcel that has been delivered or an item that is frequently touched;
- before putting on or removing protective equipment.

Dispensers containing a hydroalcoholic solution containing at least 60% alcohol must be set up in key spots (e.g., public washrooms) so that people can disinfect their hands. Measures (such as signs) must be taken to encourage customers to make use of these tools.

Contactless payment (e.g., debit card used at a contactless terminal) should be favoured, as it eliminates the need for customers to touch the payment terminal. If a customer wants to pay in cash, the cashier, server or bar employee disinfects his hands immediately after the transaction, using a no-rinse cleaning product (hydroalcoholic solution containing at least 60% alcohol). If a customer handles or touches a payment terminal, the latter must immediately be disinfected. It should also be covered with a flexible material that can be easily cleaned (e.g., a plastic film).

Wearing gloves at the cash register or when serving customers is not recommended; it could easily generate a false sense of security, leading to the contamination of multiple surfaces while forgetting to change gloves as required. Those who do wear gloves must still wash their hands.



### Respiratory etiquette

Complying with respiratory etiquette guidelines calls for:


- covering one's mouth and nose while coughing or sneezing, and using tissues or coughing/sneezing in the crook of one's elbow;
- using single-use tissues;
- immediately throwing used tissues in the garbage;
- refraining from touching one's mouth or eyes with one's hands, whether or not gloves are worn.



### Application of good hygiene practices with regard to frequently used or touched tools, equipment and surfaces

Seeing as the COVID-19 virus can live for a certain period on various surfaces, applying good hygiene practices is critical.

- The establishment's ventilation systems must be verified to ensure they are operational and well-maintained, based on regulatory requirements and the tasks performed.
- Sanitary facilities must be cleaned according to customer traffic, but at least every work shift. They must also be disinfected on a daily basis.
- Dining areas must be cleaned after each meal and disinfected on a daily basis. For example:
  - refrigerator handles;
  - backs of chairs;
  - microwave ovens.

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- Cleaning and disinfecting must be carried according to use (e.g., at every work shift) and whenever tools, equipment, surfaces or other items are visibly soiled or frequently touched. For example:
    - tables;
    - counters;
    - door handles;
    - faucets;
    - toilets;
    - telephones;
    - computer accessories;
    - railings;
    - switches.
  - The tools and equipment used must be cleaned after every work shift and whenever they are shared.
  - The right cleaning and disinfecting products must be used (see the manufacturer’s recommendations and avoid mixing cleaning products together).
  - Areas with customer traffic must be cleaned at least once a day and more often if possible (as often as every 2 to 4 hours, depending on volume).
  - All objects, equipment or other surfaces liable to come into contact with food must be cleaned and disinfected according to the methods recommended by the MAPAQ (Québec department of agriculture, fisheries and food).
  - All non-essential items (magazines, newspapers and knickknacks) must be removed from common areas.

Online resources can be consulted for more information on [cleaning surfaces](#) as well as [recommended disinfecting products](#).



## Legal obligations

Existing legal obligations in the area of occupational health and safety, and more specifically regarding employers and employees, must be applied in conjunction with COVID-19. Below is a summary of these imperatives.

### Employers

Employers are required to protect the health and ensure the safety and well-being of their employees. As per the provisions of section 51 of the [\*Act respecting occupational health and safety\*](#), employers must take all of the necessary measures in this regard. This notably entails implementing methods and techniques for identifying, controlling and eliminating risks.

In light of the current situation, i.e., COVID-19, employers must ensure that the preventive measures generally relied on are adapted. If not, they must make the necessary changes to these measures with a view to protecting their employees from potential contamination.

Employers must also notify employees of the risks inherent in their work, including those associated with COVID-19. They must also provide appropriate training, supervision and coaching so that all employees have the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their tasks in a safe manner.

### Employees

All employees are required to take the measures necessary to ensure their own health, safety and well-being, and to avoid endangering the health, safety and well-being of other employees in the workplace ([\*section 49\*](#) of the *Act respecting occupational health and safety*). This notably entails complying with the rules and measures brought into force in connection with COVID-19, much as they are required to adhere to all other rules applicable in the workplace. Employees are also required to take part in the identification and elimination of risks. If they observe any specific risks or have any recommendations in this regard, they must discuss their concerns with the health and safety committee (if such a committee exists), their superior or an employer representative.

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This guide and related toolkit are the result of a process designed to help workplaces cope with various occupational health and safety issues associated with COVID-19. This project is still underway and will ultimately be aligned with the preventive measures recommended by public health authorities.

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COVID-19 information line: **1 877 644-4545** To communicate with a CNESST inspector: **1 844 838-0808**