

Guidance for Restaurants & Other Food Premises

Ontario's [Roadmap to Reopen](#) is a three-step plan to safely and gradually lift public health measures. For the most up to date timelines for moving between steps, visit the [Roadmap](#).

This document provides an overview of general rules and guidance applicable to all steps of the Reopening Plan, including some additional details for Step 3.

For an Overview of Provincial Rules **specific to the current Reopening Step**, visit:

- [COVID-19 public health measures and advice](#)

Restaurant and food premise owners and operators should also review:

- [Ontario's Restaurant and food services health and safety during COVID-19](#)

This document provides Public Health recommendations for opening under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#). **The recommendations described here may be subject to changes, or additions, based on any new requirements set out in the [Provincial Emergency Orders](#).**

Restaurant/food premises should consider the recommendations described below to help reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 among staff, patrons, and the community. It is the owner's/operator's responsibility to provide an environment that minimizes the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Any *new* restaurants planning to open, or restaurants planning renovations, must contact Public Health before opening to arrange for an inspection by filling out a [Food Premise Opening Notification Form](#).

Please note, there is no requirement for restaurants to be inspected by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) before **re**-opening. After re-opening, regular inspections by Public Health Inspectors will resume to ensure compliance with the [Ontario Regulation 493/17 Food Premises, food safety standards](#) and [COVID-19 prevention measures](#) in the workplace and in [restaurant and food services](#). Inspection results will be posted on [Check Before You Choose](#).

Public Health does not approve plans or provide advice regarding your ability to operate, and it remains the business' responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable laws.

Rules Specific to Reopening Steps 1, 2 and 3

For an overview of Provincial Rules currently in effect review [COVID-19 public health measures and advice](#).

For detailed regulatory requirements, owners and operators should review:

- Rules for Step 1*: [Ontario Regulation 82/20 – Schedules 6-10](#)
- Rules for Step 2*: [Ontario Regulation 263/20](#)
- Rules for Step 3*: [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#)

*Business owners and operators should check back routinely for updates to the above regulations. For an overview of each step, visit [Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen](#).

It remains the responsibility of the business to ensure they are following health and safety precautions, and are in compliance with the appropriate regulatory requirements.

Brief Overview of Rules Specific to Step 3

Under Step 3 – Restaurants, bars, food trucks, concession stands and other food or drink establishments, may open if they comply with conditions laid out in [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#). These conditions include, but are not limited to:

- The total number of patrons permitted to be seated, whether indoors or outdoors, must be limited to the number that can maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person at the establishment
- The establishment must be configured so that patrons seated at different tables are separated by:
 - a distance of at least two metres, or
 - plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
- Post capacity limit in a location visible to the public
- Actively screen [employees](#) and dine-in [patrons/customers](#) (with limited exceptions, see [O.Reg.364/20](#))
- Record contact information for every patron unless patron enters temporarily to place, pick up or pay for a takeout order (with limited exceptions, see [O.Reg.364/20](#))
- No patron shall dance at the establishment (see [O.Reg.364/20](#) for exemptions for establishments with dance facilities, noting that different restrictions apply for food and drink establishments with dance facilities, including reduced capacity limits)
- For complete requirements and details, see [Ontario Regulation 364/20](#)

***Please review the remainder of this document for other rules that are applicable to all steps of the Reopening Plan as well as additional details to support implementation of the above.**

Safety Plan

- The person responsible for any business that is open must [prepare and make available a safety plan](#) in accordance with [O. Reg 82/20](#), [O. Reg 263/20](#) and [O. Reg 364/20](#), including but not limited to:
 - Describe the measures and procedures which have been or will be implemented in the establishment to reduce the transmission risk of COVID-19,
 - Describe how the requirements will be implemented by including screening, physical distancing, masks or face coverings, cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and objects and the wearing of personal protective equipment,
 - The safety plan shall be in writing and shall be made available to any person for review or request, AND
 - A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous place where it is most likely to come to the attention of individuals working in or attending the location

For a guide and checklist to prepare your safety plan, visit [Develop your COVID-19 workplace safety plan](#).

Screening for Symptoms

- Post signs at all entrances to the premises in a conspicuous location visible to the public to inform **the general public (e.g. take-out customers)** [how to self-screen for COVID-19](#) prior to entering the premises.
- All employees and dine-in patrons must be **actively** screened for COVID-19 before they are permitted entry into the workplace. Screening should occur before or when a person enters the establishment. The following online screening tools can be used to support the screening requirements (can be completed on a paper-based questionnaire, asked directly with answers recorded, or be completed electronically ahead of arrival):
 - [COVID-19 Worker and Employee Screening Tool](#)
 - [COVID-19 Customer Screening Tool](#)Staff or patrons can be instructed to complete the above online tools and bring a copy of the result by saving the result on their mobile device or by printing out their result to bring in.
- Remind employees about the importance of reporting illness to their supervisor/manager
- Employers/employees should not work if they are not feeling well or have any symptoms.
 - If an employee/employer becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms while working, they should go home immediately and [self-isolate](#).
 - Anyone experiencing symptoms should book an appointment [assessment centre](#) for testing.

- Establish criteria for employees who have been sick to return to work:
 - Employees who tested positive for COVID-19 are able to return to work following the guidance from Public Health, as outlined in the [WDGPH Guidance for Testing Positive and Contact Tracing](#).
 - If the sick employee receives a negative COVID-19 test **AND** they have not been identified as a “close contact” of someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days, they can return to work after they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours.
 - Clearance tests are not required for return to work.
- **An individual that lives with someone who has symptoms must also stay home, as per the following Provincial direction:**
 - Everyone in your household must stay home if anyone has COVID symptoms or is waiting for test results after experiencing symptoms.
 - Stay home until the person with symptoms gets a negative COVID-19 test result, or is cleared by public health, or is diagnosed with another illness.

Collecting Contact Information for Every Patron

The person responsible for the establishment must:

- [Record the name and contact information](#) of **every** patron that enters an indoor or outdoor dining area in the establishment, unless the patron temporarily enters the area to place, pick up or pay for a takeout order,
- Maintain the records for a period of **at least one month**, and
- Only disclose the records to a medical officer of health or an inspector under the [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#) on request for a purpose specified in section 2 of that Act or as otherwise required by law.

Promote Physical Distancing and Safe Flow

- COVID-19 is largely transmitted through respiratory droplets that can spread up to two metres. Maintain two meters distance between staff and patrons, where possible
- Where possible, facilitate one-way flow of people throughout the establishment to minimize face-to-face traffic.
- Re-arrange equipment and/or processes in the kitchen and other areas used by staff so that a two metre distance between staff members is possible at all times.
- Reconfigure break rooms/areas and eating areas for staff to physically distance; and consider using barriers on lunch tables
- If necessary, re-arrange or create additional food pick-up areas for servers to maintain distance (e.g., use the bar as a serving area).

Patron Space

- Re-arrange, remove, or mark some seating/tables as unavailable to patrons in order to allow for:
 - A minimum of 2 metres between the back of chairs of every table being used by patrons; or
 - Ensure tables are separated by [plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier](#).
 - Be aware of current limitations related to [group gatherings](#).
- Remove seating from high traffic areas, if possible.
 - High traffic areas may include near washrooms, pathways to seating areas, entrances, etc.
- [Install physical barriers](#), such as Plexiglas or similar, to protect staff and patrons in situations where physical distancing may be challenging to consistently monitor.
 - For example, install physical barriers at cashier areas and host desks, when applicable. Consider installing physical barriers between back-to-back booths and other areas, as necessary.
- Use posters, signage, arrows, barriers, or other markings to promote physical distancing at the safe flow of people.

Face Coverings and Eye Protection

- Ensure employees/customers adhere to face covering and eye protection rules under Ontario Regulations ([O. Reg 82/20](#), [O. Reg 263/20](#) and [O. Reg 364/20](#)), and [Updated Section 22 Class Order](#) requiring persons inside an establishment to wear face coverings **anytime more than one person is inside a room (including staff only areas)**.
- Please review the [Section 22 Class Order](#) for details on people who are exempt from wearing a face covering and for details on when it is reasonably required to temporarily remove a face covering.
- [Proof of exemption from mandatory face mask order not required](#)
- Post [signs](#) at entrances to inform customers about the Section 22 Order.
- Face coverings are required to be worn indoors, even if patrons are only temporarily entering a food premise to pick up a takeout order.
- A face covering and eye protection (e.g., safety glasses, face shield, goggles) are **required** if, while providing services, a person comes within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering.
 - **A face covering and eye protection are strongly advised when 2 m distancing cannot be maintained, even when both persons are wearing face coverings.**
- Train staff on the [proper use of masks](#), and how to safely put on and take off a mask.
- Masks do not replace the need for physical distancing, hand washing, and staying home when sick.

Considerations for Self-Serve and Buffets

Self-serve buffets are permitted in Step 3 of Ontario's Reopening Plan. Below are some considerations for self-serve and buffets:

- Foods must be protected from potential contamination using appropriate barriers.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (Health Canada approved) should be provided at the station with signage requiring patrons to use it.
- Reduce crowding by limiting the number of patrons permitted at the buffet at any one time.
- Ensure patrons are maintaining a two metres distance at all times by using floor markings, creating a one-way flow of people, and monitoring the space.
- Masks/face covering must be worn when not eating or drinking at a table.
- Provide clean plates at the buffet. Clear away used plates from tables so customers do not return to the buffet with a dirty/used plate.
- Each container must have its own serving utensil to prevent cross contamination.
 - Change or disinfect serving utensils frequently
- Frequently touched surfaces, handles, buttons, must be disinfected often throughout the day using a Health Canada approved disinfectant. Preferably the cleaning/disinfection should be logged.
- Prepackaged sugar/sweeteners, milk, and creamers in individual portions are still recommended at this time.
- At fountain drink dispensers, ensure patrons do not use station for dumping/disposal of drinks and that station is not used for refilling used cups
 - E.g., Post signage with wording to the effect of "No dumping" and either "No refills" or "For refills, please request a clean cup from staff at the counter"
- Disposable cups, lids, stir sticks and straws must all be prepackaged, or available in a dispenser that does not allow for common handling. Otherwise, they must be provided at the counter upon order.
- Napkins must be kept in a napkin holder.

For additional food safety tips as they relate to self-serve buffets, please visit our: [Salad Bars and Buffets Information Sheet](#).

Promote Good Hand and Respiratory Hygiene

- According to [Section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Class Order](#) alcohol-based hand sanitizer (Health Canada approved) must be available at all entrances and exits.

- Staff and patrons should be advised to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
 - Washing hands frequently with warm, soapy water and/or
 - Sanitizing hands frequently with hand sanitizer.
 - Respiratory etiquette includes coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow or disposable tissue.
- Post handwash signage in washrooms or other common areas: [How to Wash Your Hands](#).
- Food handlers must continue to regularly wash their hands, as already required in the regulations
- Non-food handlers and service staff should be reminded to wash/sanitize their hands properly and regularly after:
 - Processing payments
 - Coughing, sneezing, or touching the face
 - Cleaning and sanitizing/disinfecting surfaces
 - Upon starting a shift, returning from a break or lunch
 - Making or receiving deliveries; or
 - Any other time hands may have become contaminated.
- Handwashing stations must be equipped with soap, single use towels, and warm, running water at all times.
- Glove use among staff is not a requirement. Good hand hygiene and proper hand washing is preferred. Incorrect glove use can lead to cross-contamination of surfaces. If staff choose to use gloves, they should practice proper handwashing before they put the gloves on, and after they take the gloves off. Gloves need to be changed frequently. Plastic, latex, and nitrile gloves are intended to be single-use only.

Increase Cleaning and Disinfecting Practices

- Owners/operators should establish a plan to enhance cleaning and disinfecting practices
- Follow proper protocols for cleaning and sanitizing kitchen, food preparation and food-contact surfaces as required in the [Ontario Regulation 493/17 Food Premises](#).
- Please refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Canada](#) for cleaning and disinfection in public settings.
- All other public common areas and high-touch, non-food contact surface areas (e.g., doorknobs, counters, handrails, debit/credit card machines, phones, keyboards) require regular disinfecting (i.e., at least twice daily or more as required).
- Disinfectant solution should have an 8-digit drug identification number (DIN) approved by [Health Canada](#). This indicates that it is effective against COVID-19.
 - Alternatively, diluted bleach solution can be used, but requires surfaces to be cleaned prior to disinfection and at least one-minute contact time. Note that bleach solution gets weaker in heat and sun. If kept outside (i.e., on the patio), the solution should be replaced with a fresh dilution at least twice a day. [Health Canada](#)

recommends diluted bleach be prepared according to the instructions on the label or, if the bleach is 5 per cent sodium hypochlorite, in a ratio of:

- 1 teaspoon (5 mL) per cup (250 mL); or
 - Four teaspoons (20 mL) per litre (1000 mL).
- Always read and follow manufacturers' instructions for safe use (e.g., wear gloves and use in well-ventilated area). Ensure there is a process in the workplace to verify appropriate concentration levels if the disinfectant is not purchased pre-mixed.

Implement Additional Safety Procedures for Staff and Patrons

- Stagger shifts, lunches, and breaks to prevent overlap and congestion of staff. Establish a plan to reduce or manage congestion effectively and support physical distancing.
- Establish consistent work teams for each shift and/or alter shift schedules so that the same groups of staff are always assigned to the same shifts. This is known as “cohorting” and can reduce the spread of COVID-19 by minimizing the number of different individuals who come into close contact with each other.
- Employers/employees must not work if they have traveled [outside of Canada](#) within the past 14 days.
- Require that staff limit the time they spend within two metres of other persons as much as possible. This may include introducing new practices or procedures.
- Remind staff to wash their work clothes between use.
- Where feasible, owners/operators should consider implementing cashless/touchless payment systems or encouraging debit or credit card payment. Proper handwashing/hand sanitizing must be practiced after each payment is processed.

For Patrons

- Consider taking reservations only, versus walk-in business. This will help to monitor capacity and ensure physical distancing is possible.
- Establish a plan for encouraging physical distancing among patrons.
- Avoid using re-usable menus if they cannot be properly disinfected after each use.
 - Instead, consider switching to single-use, paper menus and/or using menu boards, online menus, or chalk-/white-boards.
- Avoid using shared/table condiments if they cannot be properly sanitized after each use. Instead, consider switching to single-serve versions, or by order to be prepared by the kitchen
- Avoid pre-setting tables. Utensils should be rolled or packaged and offer disposable napkins where possible. If reusable linen napkins are used, they must be placed in a

laundry bag and washed with hot water (60-90°C) and detergent and dried well, as recommended by the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Maintain Communication

- Ensure staff are aware of any policies or procedures that will be implemented while operating within the context of COVID-19. Restaurant owners/operators should provide additional training to staff on all new procedures and requirements.
- Ensure all employees know to stay home if they have any signs of illness, and report if they have symptoms while at work. Employees should be made aware of any procedures for reporting symptoms to management.
- Owners/operators should consider communicating to patrons about the policies, procedures, or other practices they are implementing to help minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., via social media). This will help patrons know what to expect before coming to the establishment.
- In addition, as noted above, owners/operators should consider posting signage throughout the space to remind patrons and staff about:
 - [COVID-19 symptoms and staying home when ill](#);
 - [Physical distancing practices](#)
 - [Good hand hygiene](#)
 - [How to safely wear a face covering](#)
- If you believe one of your staff members may have COVID-19 or has tested positive for the virus, you should contact Public Health at **1-800-265-7293 ext. 7006**.

Re-Opening After a Closure: Complete an Initial Walk-Through

- After restaurants and other food premises have been closed for dine-in services for an extended period of time, it is important for management to perform a walk-through of the establishment to identify any areas of concern and take action, as applicable.
- Consider the following before resuming business:
 - Check the condition of all food and discard product that is past its Best Before or Expired dates, or otherwise unfit products. **“When in Doubt, Throw it Out”**
 - Check thoroughly for signs of pest activity. Contact your licenced pest control contractor or consider contracting a licenced pest management company prior to opening to ensure there is no infestation.
 - Ensure all hot and cold holding equipment are clean and functional.
 - Where applicable, ensure dishwashing machines are functioning adequately.
 - Ensure garbage storage areas are clean and of adequate size for the needs.

- Ensure faucets are working properly and flush pipes for at least five minutes. Ensure there is an adequate hot water supply.
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of soap and paper towels.
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of cleaning supplies and proper sanitizer as required in the [Ontario Regulation 493/17 Food Premises](#).
- Thoroughly wash, rinse, and sanitize all food contact surfaces and equipment before beginning operation if you have been closed for an extended period of time.
- Clean and disinfect all non-food contact surfaces, including high touch areas such as door handles and knobs, washrooms, etc. See below for more specific details about ongoing sanitizing and disinfecting.
- Ensure there is an adequate supply of disinfectant for disinfecting high touch surfaces in all spaces, including public areas.
- Only use disinfectants that are approved by [Health Canada](#) with a Drug Identification number (DIN) and check the expiry date
- Train staff on new procedures/requirements.

Applicable Laws and Regulations

- Notwithstanding the above, owners/operators of restaurants and other food premises must continue to comply with all applicable legislation, including:
 - [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#)
 - [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#), including [Regulation 493/17 – Food Premises](#);
 - [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#); and
 - All other related laws and regulations.
- Owners/operators should also refer to guidance from the [Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development](#). This Ministry guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from Public Health about food safety, or the Food Premises Regulation.

Other Resources

[COVID-19: Provincewide Shutdown](#) (Government of Ontario)

[Ontario Emergency Information](#) (Government of Ontario)

[Restaurant and Food Services Health and Safety During COVID-19](#) (Government of Ontario)

[Restaurant and Food Service: Guidance for Health & Safety](#) (Ministry of Labour)

[Resources to Prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) (Government of Ontario)

[COVID-19 Guidance for Public Washrooms](#) (WDGPH)

[Signs & Posters](#) (WDGPH)

Review the [Food Premises and Events](#) webpage for additional guidance documents.

If you have a specific question about food safety or inspections, please call the WDGPH health inspector line at 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4753. If you have any other business questions related to COVID-19, please call 519-822-2715 or 1-800-265-7293 ext. 4020.

Public Health does not approve plans or provide advice regarding your ability to operate, and it remains the business' responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable laws.

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