



Interim Guidance: Dining During the COVID-19 Pandemic – Indoor and Outdoor

September 30, 2020

This guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) for local use. It will be posted at <http://www.sfdcp.org/foodfacilities>. This guidance may change as new knowledge emerges and local community transmission changes.

BACKGROUND: With modified operations dining establishments are allowed to open for outdoor dining, and indoor dining on a limited basis. Eating establishments are required to adhere to these guidelines and must monitor and comply with all applicable Health Directives, which are posted at <http://www.sfdph.org/directives>.

It is possible – and even likely – that case numbers and other indicators will surge during the Fall and cause San Francisco’s risk level to rise back to the substantial, tier 2 (red) or even widespread, tier 1 (purple tier). The Health Officer will continually monitor all local indicators and will pause or reverse these and other re-opening measures if required to combat the spread of the pandemic in San Francisco.

AUDIENCE: All eating establishments that provide **bona fide meals** and their patrons.

Please see the **Indoor Dining Service** section for occupancy parameters.

Flu vaccines are critical in the fight against COVID-19 by (1) keeping workers and communities healthy and (2) reducing strain on our healthcare and testing systems that are responding to COVID-19. Strongly encourage all personnel to get a flu shot. Post [signage](#) to encourage flu vaccine among customers, visitors, etc.

COVID-19 BASICS

How Does Covid-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is transmitted from person-to-person and is thought to occur when:

- large droplets from coughing and sneezing are propelled directly into the face, nose, eyes, and mouth of someone nearby, usually within 6 feet (droplet transmission),
- a person breathes, talks, sings, coughs, or sneezes releasing small infectious particles which can remain suspended in the air for a period of time and/or moving beyond 6 feet on indoor air currents (aerosol transmission), and
- a person touches a surface that is contaminated and then touches a mucus membrane such as their nose, eyes or mouth (contact transmission).



Basic Covid-19 Prevention

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water.** If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Avoid Close Contact.** To the greatest extent, maintain six feet of social distancing between yourself and the people who don't live in your household.
- **Wear a Face Covering.** Cover your mouth and nose with a mask in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household.
- Routinely **clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces.
- **Monitor Your Health Daily.** Be alert of symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Definition of Dining Establishment

To reopen as a Dining Establishment, a business must serve food as “**bona fide meals.**” Serving alcoholic beverages is not permitted without also providing real meal service in a **bona fide** manner.

Definition of Bona Fide Meals

Bona fide meals means a sufficient quantity of food that it would constitute a main course. Dining Establishments should consult guidance from the State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control on what constitutes a bona fide meal. The guidance can be found at <https://www.abc.ca.gov/what-is-required-to-be-considered-a-meal>. Serving prepackaged food like sandwiches or salads, or simply heating frozen or prepared meals, do *not* qualify as bona fide meals. The state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control has stated that it will look at the totality of a licensed business' operations in determining whether it is serving legitimate meals in a bona fide manner or if the food offered is a mere pretext for opening under the state's Blueprint for a Safer Economy. The primary focus of the licensed premises should be on bona fide meal service, with the service of alcoholic beverages only as a secondary service in support of that primary focus.

Who May Serve Bona Fide Meals

Bona fide meals may be served by the dining establishment or another person or business operating under an agreement with the dining establishment. The Dining Establishment must have a valid permit to operate as a food establishment, along with any other relevant permits normally required.

Alcoholic Beverages

The sale of alcoholic beverages without a bona fide meal is prohibited, and each patron ordering an alcoholic beverage must also order a bona fide meal.

Prepare and Post a Health and Safety Plan and Social Distancing Protocol

Each dining establishment must complete a Health and Safety Plan and post in a public location, and on the dining establishment's website, if applicable. **Compliance with this requirement of the directive is**



required to maintain your food permit. The Health and Safety Plan is in a checklist format and serves as a reminder of all the best practices that your business needs to follow including universal requirements such as requiring face coverings, [signage](#), and enforcing six foot distances between people. A Social Distancing Protocol must also be completed and posted, and is available at <https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/C19-07i-Appendix-A.pdf>.

PREPARING FOR REOPENING

Improve Ventilation

Make any necessary improvements to the ventilation of the establishment, including:

- HVAC systems (if one is present)
 - Ensure HVAC systems are serviced and functioning properly.
 - Evaluate possibilities for upgrading air filters to the highest efficiency possible.
 - Increase the percentage of outdoor air through the HVAC system, readjusting or overriding recirculation (“economizer”) dampers.
 - Disable demand-control ventilation controls that reduce air supply based on temperature or occupancy
 - Evaluate running the building ventilation system even when the building is unoccupied to maximize ventilation. At the minimum, reset timer-operated ventilation systems so that they start operating 1-2 hours before the building opens and 2-3 hours after the building is closed.
- Increase natural ventilation by opening windows and doors when environmental conditions and building requirements allow.
- Consider installing portable air cleaners (“HEPA filters”).
- If the establishment uses pedestal fans or hard mounted fans, adjust the direction of fans to minimize air blowing from one individual’s space to another’s space.

For more information and additional resources, please see: <https://www.sfcdcp.org/COVID-ventilation>

Check your Space after a Long Period of Low Usage.

Check for pest infestation or harborage, and make sure all pest control measures are functioning. Perform routine maintenance on ventilation systems including air ducts and vents. consider flushing out the stagnant water from the plumbing lines by running water through fixtures. Detailed guidance may be found at: <https://www.sfwater.org/flushingguidance>.



Train Personnel

Ensure that all personnel are trained on the following protocols:

- Health and Safety Plan, Social Distancing, and Screening Protocols. Share information on [COVID-19, how to prevent it from spreading](#), and which [underlying health conditions](#) may make individuals more susceptible to contracting the virus.
- How to monitor social distancing and offer gentle reminders to patrons to maintain social distance, and wear Face Coverings. Patrons should maintain a distance of six feet if they are not in the same household while waiting in line for pick up, waiting to be seated, or waiting in line for the restrooms. Personnel should remind patrons that dancing, and other congregations, for example, standing and mingling away from their tables, is not permitted.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment, including the proper way to wear face coverings and use protective gloves.
- Cleaning and disinfection techniques, and the importance of disinfecting frequently touched surfaces. See [DPH Guidance on cleaning](#).
- De-escalation with patrons who do not comply with policies and provide resources to personnel to address anxiety, stress, and mental health. Examples of trainings include de-escalation training from the National Restaurant Association. (<https://www.servsafe.com/freecourses>) Recognize the fear in returning to work, communicate transparently, listen, and survey regularly.
- Employer or government-sponsored sick leave and other benefits the personnel may be entitled to receive that would make it financially easier to stay at home (see Paid sick leave in San Francisco). Remember that personnel cannot be fired due to COVID-19 results or needed time off for recovery. To access the links in this Guidance, please view it at www.sfcddcp.org/foodfacilities

Create a Safer Space

You may need to change the physical layout of your business to help social distancing for patrons and personnel. Modifications to consider include creating separate entrances and exits, marking spaces with tape or other decals to indicate six-foot distances, and erecting transparent shields around high patron contact areas such as checkout counters.

- **Redesign layout to allow for proper social distancing.** Space workstations at least six feet apart.
- **Create separate spaces for vendor pickups and/or deliveries, take-out, and dine-in protocols.** To the greatest extent possible, create separate paths for dine-in patrons, for payment and/or pickup if possible. Introduce clear signage for take-out versus dine-in areas.
- **Create sufficient space to enable the customer to stand at least six feet away from the cashier** while items are being paid for, or provide a physical barrier, for example, Plexiglas large enough to prevent transmission of respiratory droplets between the patron and the cashier.
- **Close areas where patrons may congregate, serve themselves, or touch items that other guests may use.** For example, close salad bars, buffets, condiment caddies, and self-service food dispensers.



- **Create markings that indicate 6-foot distancing for patrons in various settings** (e.g. waiting to order, waiting for restroom, ordering take-out, or waiting to be seated). **Paths to restroom, pick-up/take out counters, and entrances/exits must be clearly marked.**
- **Post signage** reminding patrons of the need to **wear face coverings at all times** except while eating and drinking.
- **Make sanitizer available at point of sales area and exits/entrances.**
- **Coat and bag checks must be closed.**

PROTECT PERSONNEL

Coordinate your Efforts

Designate a COVID-19 Worksite Safety Monitor, who can act as the staff liaison, and single point of contact for Personnel at each site for questions or concerns around practices, protocols, or potential exposure. This person will also serve as a liaison to SFDPH. The liaison should train staff to advise patrons, if necessary, that the dining establishment will refuse service to the customer if they fail to comply with safety requirements.

Screen Personnel and Encourage Testing

- **Conduct wellness checks for everyone (employees, vendors, and delivery staff) before they enter the building.** Screening instructions for personnel is found at www.sfdcp.org/screening-handout. **Establishments must exclude those who answer yes** to any of the questions on the above form.
- **Encourage COVID-19 testing.** Many people with COVID-19 do not know they are sick because they have no symptoms, yet they can still infect others. Testing for COVID-19 is available in San Francisco. Healthcare providers in San Francisco are **REQUIRED** to test anyone with COVID-19 symptoms (see sfdcp.org/covid19symptoms). If you want to get tested when you have no symptoms, health insurers in California are **REQUIRED** to pay for testing for essential workers including restaurant workers. If you choose to get tested when you have no symptoms, do not get tested more frequently than once every 2 weeks. If you are uninsured, you can get tested at CityTestSF (sf.gov/citytestsf).
- **If you are feeling ill with cold or flu-like symptoms, you MUST get tested for COVID-19** and have a negative result before being allowed to go back to work (see sfdcp.org/screen and sfdcp.org/rtw). If you are feeling ill, get tested and **DO NOT** enter a business or organization unless it is for core essential needs (such as food, housing, health care, etc.) that you cannot obtain by any other means.
- **Take all possible steps to prevent getting sick.** Wear a face covering, practice good hand hygiene, stay physically distant from others (at least six feet), and do not approach the dining table until patrons are masked.
- **Strongly encourage all personnel to get a flu shot.** Flu vaccines are critical in the fight against COVID-19 by (1) keeping workers and communities healthy and (2) reducing strain on our healthcare and testing systems that are responding to COVID-19. Post signage to encourage flu vaccine among Patrons, visitors, etc.

Require Masks and Other Protective Equipment



Everyone must wear face coverings at all times except when actively eating or drinking. This includes both personnel (vendors, delivery drivers) and patrons.

Servers and other “front-of-house” staff may choose to wear a more protective mask (“respirator”) instead of cloth face covering for increased protection while working indoors – especially if they are at high risk of having severe disease if they get COVID-19 (see www.sfcddcp.org/vulnerable). Check [for NIOSH-approval](#) of N95 Respirators if you are going to buy them. *If you use an N95 Respirator with a valve, you must cover the valve with an additional face covering.*

Consider Other Measures to Protect Personnel

- **Limit in-person personnel gatherings** (for example, staff meetings) to the greatest extent possible. Consider holding staff meetings virtually.
- **Create additional shifts** with fewer personnel to accommodate social distancing.
- **Personnel should each have their own pen or pencil** that is not shared.

SIGNAGE

Dining establishments **must** post signage stating the following. Sample signage will be available at <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>.

- Conspicuously post signage around the Dining Establishment – including at all primary public entrances – reminding people to adhere to physical distancing, hygiene, and Face Covering Requirements and to stay at home when they feel ill. Posted signage must include a standalone sign bearing the message: that (1) COVID-19 is transmitted through the air and the risk is much higher indoors and (2) seniors and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds. Examples of signs can be found at <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>. Post signage reminding Patrons and Personnel that COVID-19 can be spread by individuals who do not feel sick or show outward symptoms of infection.
- Post signage informing patrons that they must be seated at tables to consume food or beverages, and that they must be at least six feet away from Patrons at other tables at all times.
- Post signage at tables reminding patrons to wear Face Coverings when interacting with staff (ordering or paying) and at all other times when they are not eating or drinking.
- Dining establishments offering alcoholic beverage service must post signage informing Patrons that they may not drink or carry open containers beyond the premises; and that alcoholic beverages may only be served with a meal.

DINING SERVICE – ALL ESTABLISHMENTS

Welcome Patrons

- **Eating establishments must verbally screen all patrons upon entry** with the questions about COVID-19 symptoms and exposure to COVID-19. Facilities must ask the questions and relay the information found at: <https://www.sfcddcp.org/screeningvisitors>. Facilities must exclude those who answer yes to any of the questions on the above form.



- **Advise Patrons that they must wear face coverings any time they are not eating or drinking**, including but not limited to: While they are waiting to be seated; while reviewing the menu and ordering; while socializing at a table waiting for their food and drinks to be served or after courses or the meal is complete; and any time they leave the table, such as to use a restroom. Patrons must also wear face coverings any time servers, bussers, or other Personnel approach their table. Personnel must not approach a customer's table until the customer has replaced their face covering.

Adapt Reservation and Seating Process

- **Encourage reservations to limit crowds.** Ensure that timing of reservations allows sufficient time for cleaning and disinfection between patrons.
- **Ask Patrons to voluntarily provide a contact name and phone number** for their group for possible contact tracing. Restaurants should keep this information on file for at least 3 weeks. Patrons are not required to provide contact information.
- **Patrons in a single group are limited to six Patrons, unless they are all in the same household.** We strongly encourage that only individuals in the same household should sit together in a dining setting. People in the same party seated at the same table do not have to be six feet apart.
- **All Patrons must be seated at a table to eat or drink.** Standing between tables or gathering in other areas of the dining establishment is not permitted. Patrons are not allowed to stand, gather, dance, or circulate between tables.
- **Patrons may not be served food or beverages while waiting to be seated.**
- **Plan customer seating arrangements** assigning each customer group to promote distancing.
- **Consider having Patrons seat themselves** by displaying table numbers. Have a greeter behind plexiglass assigning Patrons tables (after verbal screening for COVID-19).
- **Keep Personnel schedule records** in order to facilitate contact tracing.
- **Limit the number of staff serving each party** to reduce possible contacts. Ideally, one person should serve each table.
- **Tableside preparation or presentation of food tableside is prohibited.**

Prevent Cross-Contamination from Touching Common Items

- **Consider having electronic menus and/or electronic ordering** for patrons to view on their mobile devices. Alternately, provide laminated menus that are disinfected after each use.
- **Encourage Patrons to use touchless payment options** and sanitize any pens or other equipment after each use.
- **Discontinue presetting tables with utensils and glassware**, provide utensils in a prewrapped cloth or paper napkin and use disposable napkins or tablecloths where possible.
- **Cleaned flatware, stemware, dishware, etc., is covered** and kept away from Patrons and personnel until ready to use.
- **Disinfect dining location after every use.** This includes tables, chairs, and highchairs/boosters.



Follow instructions on disinfectants, inform your guests to allow time to be disinfected

- **Limit the number of passable objects on table** (No card stands, candles, flower vases) and provide condiments such as ketchup, mustard, hot sauce in single servings upon request.
- **Tablecloths must be changed after each use.**
- **Do not provide shared entertainment items** such as board games, pool tables, or arcade games.
- **Provide leftover containers only upon request.** Staff should not fill the leftover container. Each party should fill its own leftover containers. Any Personnel moving items used by patrons, dirty linens, or handling trash bags must wash hands after handling those items or use disposable gloves (and wash hands before putting them on and after removing them), and change aprons frequently.
- **Reusable customer items including utensils, food ware, breadbaskets, etc., must be properly washed, rinsed, and sanitized.** Use disposable items if proper cleaning of reusable items is infeasible.

OUTDOOR DINING SERVICE

Promote Outdoor Seating

- **If possible, prioritize outdoor seating areas for your Patrons.** Increasing evidence shows the COVID-19 virus can spread through the air. Fresh air is important, and outdoor settings are safer than indoor ones.
- **Patrons dining outdoors must remain outdoors** and may enter the establishment only to access a bathroom, to access an outdoor space that is only accessible by traveling through the restaurant, or to order or pickup food at an indoor counter.

Create a Safer Space

- **Barriers:** If outdoor service tables cannot be spaced far enough apart to ensure that Patrons are at least six feet apart from other seated Patrons, then the dining establishment must install an impermeable physical barrier between outdoor service tables to protect Patrons and Personnel.
- **Umbrellas, canopies, and other shade structures must allow the free flow of air through the area.**
- **Live entertainment that might increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission is prohibited.** For example, wind instruments, singing, or strenuous dancing or acrobatics are prohibited, while string instruments or piano are permissible.

INDOOR DINING SERVICE

Reduce Seating Capacity



- **Dining establishments must limit the number of Patrons to 25% of the established occupancy limit** for the space and no more than 100 people. This limit applies to numbers of Patrons, not Personnel.
- **For establishments with multiple rooms, limit the capacity in each room to 25% of the maximum capacity.** This capacity limit includes outdoor dining patrons who may need to enter the building to order food or use the restroom, and Patrons who may need to enter the building to pick up food or takeout.
- **Post the occupancy limit** at the entrance to the building.

Create a Safer Space

- **Ensure that seated Patrons maintain at least six feet distance from other Patrons seated at different service tables.** Use signage, ropes, removal of chairs, or other means to indicate which tables that are not available for use. At 25% capacity, impermeable barriers are not permitted as a substitute to maintaining six feet distance.
- **Seating arrangements should spread Patrons throughout the available interior space** to allow for maximum distance between Patrons.
- **Discontinue seating patrons in areas where they cannot maintain at least six feet of distance from Personnel work areas,** such as certain checkout counters or food preparation areas.
- Entertainment is not permitted indoors at this time. This includes live entertainment or televisions, or other types of screens.
- A two-hour limit for indoor dining is required.
- Service for food and beverage ends at **12:00 am**, Patrons may stay and finish their meal until 12:30 am. **At 12:30 am indoor dining spaces must be closed to the public.**

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

What and When to Disinfect

- **Use disinfectants on frequently touched surfaces, but not for food contact surfaces.** For food contact surfaces, continue following state requirements for Cleaning and Sanitizing of Equipment and Utensils (California Health & Safety Code, Part 7 Chap. 5).
- **Disinfect highly touched surfaces once per hour.** Disinfection is most important on frequently touched surfaces such as tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc. Keep a bottle of disinfectant and cloth handy near intensely used areas such as payment areas.
- **Disinfect each customer seating location before opening each day and after every use, including tables, chairs, booster seats, highchairs, booths, and the sides of such surfaces.**
- **Frequently disinfect bathrooms, at least every four hours.** Conspicuously post the checklist inside each bathroom clearly detailing the dates and times the room was last cleaned, disinfected, or restocked.

How to Disinfect



- **Read and follow product label instructions for required protective equipment.** Gloves are frequently required to protect the users, long sleeves and eye protection are not uncommon.
- **Clean first, then disinfect.** Disinfectants do not work well on soiled surfaces. See SF DPH Cleaning Guidance.
- **Use the right product.** Choose EPA-registered disinfectants that are approved COVID-19. Find a complete list of approved products at <https://cfpub.epa.gov/giwiz/disinfectants/index.cfm>; you may also check the SF Environment website for reduced risk products.
- **If concentrates must be used, follow dilution directions carefully and wear eye protection and gloves.** Follow label directions for products which require dilution. Measure, rather than "eye estimate" both the concentrate and the water; some suppliers have "Metered Dispensing Systems" which automate the measuring process. Don't forget to clearly label all containers with diluted products."
- **Using too much product does not improve its performance and can create hazards for both the user and others who come into contact with treated surfaces.** In the case of chlorine bleach please note that for COVID-19 the CDC specifies a different concentration of bleach (5 Tablespoons per gallon of water or 4 teaspoons per quart of water) than is used for other applications.
- **Don't wipe it off immediately.** EPA approved disinfectants require a minimum contact time to be effective against the human coronavirus, and the disinfectant must be left on the surface for this amount of time before being wiped off.

FAQ

Q. How do I calculate the number of Patrons who can be in my restaurant?

A. Divide the established occupancy limit for the establishment by four. Do the same on a room-by-room basis, if your restaurant has multiple dining rooms. The total number of Patrons may not exceed 100.

Q. Should we require our staff to get regular testing?

A. At this time, we do not recommend regular testing of your staff. However; through daily screening, if your staff has answer "yes" to any of the questions, please take the necessary steps in outlined in the screening handout to test, quarantine and isolate.

Q: I want to protect my workers as much as possible. What do I need to know about N95 and similar masks?

A: Choose an N95 respirator that is approved by the Center for Disease Control's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Follow manufacturer's instructions. Do not share respirators. If N95 respirators are provided, CalOSHA requirements may apply (see <https://www.dir.ca.gov/Title8/5144d.html>).

- Because restaurant patrons will be removing their masks while eating and drinking and indoor interactions are riskier than outdoor interactions, servers and other "front-of-house" staff may choose to wear an N95 respirator instead of cloth face covering for increased protection while working indoors – especially if they are at high risk of having severe disease if they get COVID-19 (see www.sfc-dcp.org/vulnerable). If N95 respirators are provided, CalOSHA requirements may apply (see <https://www.dir.ca.gov/Title8/5144d.html>). If using an N95 mask:



- Choose NIOSH approved N95, N99, or N100, R99 or R100, or P99 and P100 respirators. The NIOSH Approval will tell you the protection of the respirator you are purchasing. Read and heed all instructions provided by the manufacturer on use, maintenance, cleaning and care, and warnings regarding the respirator's limitations. Forthcoming information on how to safely use N95 masks will be posted at: www.sfcddcp.org/ppe
- Do not share respirators.
- If you use an N95 respirator with a valve, you must cover the valve with an additional face covering.

Q. Are we allowed to have buffet?

A. No, buffets are prohibited at this time due to the increased risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Q. Are patrons allowed tabletop/self-cook?

A. No, patrons are not allowed to tabletop/self-cooking to ensure proper ventilation in the dining space.

Q. How often should restrooms be disinfected?

A. Restrooms should be disinfected at the beginning of the workday (or done at closing) and should be disinfected every 4 hours.

Q. How often should we clean areas?

A. Disinfect high touch surfaces such as door handles, payment machines, counter tops, toilet seats, and faucets at least once per hour. Post a cleaning log conspicuously in each bathroom.

Resources

Stay informed. Information is changing rapidly. Useful resources can be found at:

- Printable resources such as signage:
 - <https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>



- San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFPDH)
 - <https://www.sfdcp.org/covid19>
- California Blueprint for a Safer Economy issued by the State of California
 - <https://covid19.ca.gov/safer-economy/#reopening-data>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - List of Guidance documents (searchable)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/guidance-list.html>
- Promoting face covering-wearing during the COVID-19 pandemic: A POLICYMAKER'S GUIDE
 - <https://preventepidemics.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Promoting-Face-covering-Wearing-During-COVID-19.pdf>