

Guidance for Restaurants & Other Food Premises

This document provides Public Health recommendations for re-opening outdoor restaurant/bar patios and/or indoor dine-in services 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](#).

Owners/operators of restaurants and other food premises in Wellington County, Dufferin County and the City of Guelph can prepare their establishment for the phased in re-opening. Re-opening restaurants, or any business during these unprecedented times, does not go without some risk. Owners/operators of restaurants or other food premises must decide whether opening under these constraints, and with these risks, is technically, logistically, and financially feasible. Those that choose to re-open their 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.

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](#).

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](#).

Stage 3 Requirements

As part of [Stage 3 of reopening the province](#), under [Ontario Regulation 263/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 2](#) and [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#), the Ontario Government is allowing restaurants, bars, food trucks and other food and drink establishments (e.g., wineries, breweries and distilleries) to open if they comply with the following conditions:

1. No buffet-style service may be provided
2. Patrons must be seated at all times when eating or drinking in any area of the establishment in which food or drink is permitted, including both outdoor and indoor areas, except:
 - while entering the area and while moving to their table,

- while placing or picking up an order,
 - while paying for an order,
 - while exiting the area,
 - while going to or returning from a washroom,
 - while lining up to do anything listed above, or
 - where necessary for the purposes of health and safety.
3. The establishment, including both indoor and outdoor dining areas, must be configured to ensure that patrons seated at different tables are separated by:
- a distance of at least two metres, or
 - plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
4. The person responsible for the establishment must:
- record the name and contact information of **at least one member of every party** of patrons (any group of one or more) that enters an indoor or outdoor dining area in the establishment, other than patrons who temporarily enter 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.
5. Food establishments may determine their own capacities for indoor and outdoor spaces using a guideline of two metres distance from the back ends of the chairs, or edges of the table, and/or by alternating booths.
- Exception:**
- When a food establishment is booked exclusively for a private event, such as a wedding reception, and available only to invited guests and not accessible to the public, the maximum capacity at the establishment is limited to 50 people indoors and 100 people for an outdoor event. Note that the indoor gathering limit of up to 50 persons can be applied on a per room basis, excluding staff. Each 50-person dedicated space/room should be distinct or separated by an impermeable barrier.
6. No person shall dance, sing or perform music at the establishment, except under the following conditions:
- A person or group under contract with the establishment may dance, sing or perform music in compliance with the requirements set out in [O. Reg 364/20, Schedule 2, section 11](#) for Performing Arts.

- Members of the public may sing or perform music at the establishment if,
 - they are not singing or performing music in a private karaoke room;
 - they are separated from every other person, including from other performers, by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier while singing or while performing on a brass or wind instrument;
 - they maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person while singing or performing music; and
 - any equipment used by members of the public while singing or performing music is cleaned and disinfected between each use.
- 7. When there is a contracted live performance at a food establishment, the capacity must be limited to 50 people indoors and 100 people for a strictly outdoor performance.
 - If customers are seated both inside and outside during the contracted live performance, the maximum capacity at the restaurant is 50 people.

Reopening of Patios:

- As defined in [Ontario Regulation 345/20: Patios](#), a restaurant or bar patio is an area that is not an enclosed public space or an enclosed workplace and that meets the following criteria:
 - The public is ordinarily invited or permitted access to the area, either expressly or by implication, whether or not a fee is charged for entry, or the area is worked in or frequented by employees during the course of their employment, whether or not they are acting in the course of their employment at the time.
 - Food or drink is served or sold or offered for consumption in the area, or the area is part of, or operated in conjunction with, an area where food or drink is served or sold or offered.
 - The area is not primarily a private dwelling
- If the outdoor dining area is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning or other element, at least two full sides must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
- If the outdoor dining area is equipped with a retractable roof, the roof must be fully retracted and at least one full side of the outdoor dining area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.
 - Airflow in outdoor patio environments provide conditions which assist in reducing the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus. The rules for distancing, food service, and cleaning and disinfection must continue to apply to patios.

- The outdoor dining area must be configured to ensure patrons seated at different tables are separated by:
 - a distance of at least two metres, or
 - plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
- If poor weather conditions prevent customers from remaining on the patio/outdoor dining areas, move diners inside if public measures and capacity limits allows. Otherwise, while maintaining two meters physical distancing, bring customers inside to pay and take their meals for takeout.
- Follow up with your local city, municipality, or township office with any plans regarding patio extensions.

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 a 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 public areas.

- Disinfectant is NOT to be used in the kitchen, food preparation areas or for food contact surfaces
- 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.

Promote Physical Distancing and Safe Flow

- COVID-19 is largely transmitted through respiratory droplets that can spread up to two metres or six feet. Maintain two meters distance between staff and patrons, where possible.
- Be aware of physical distancing between households/social circles and current limitations related to group gatherings under the [Provincial Emergency Orders](#).
 - Groups must be seated at least two metres from any other group or separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier
 - Groups should not exceed 10 people per table
- Reservations for larger group events or meetings are now permitted
 - Meeting or event spaces may only be rented out if the total number of guests at one time is limited to the number of people that can maintain a two metre physical distance and does not exceed 50 people indoors or 100 people outdoors. The indoor gathering limit of up to 50 persons can be applied on a per room basis, excluding staff. Each 50-person dedicated space/room should be distinct or separated by an impermeable barrier.
 - An indoor event cannot be combined with an outdoor event to increase the total number of people allowed.
- Where possible, facilitate one-way flow of people throughout the establishment to minimize face-to-face traffic. Ideally, patrons and staff should not closely pass by one another, face-to-face when travelling to a table, the washrooms, etc. Also consider the following:
 - Wait staff should keep a two-metre distance from patrons when taking orders and wear masks/face-coverings.
 - Servers should deliver food from the end of the table and pass the plates down the table instead of reaching around patrons.
 - Servers walking with plates should be able to walk easily and should not have to squeeze past or turn their bodies between patrons or tables.
 - Patrons should not pass closely (i.e. within two metres) to other patrons to get to tables.
 - Avoid using the same door for entry and exit to the patio.

Monitor Entry into the Space

- Consider having a staff member present at the establishment's entrance(s) to monitor entry.
- The number of people allowed on a patio must be limited to support physical distancing measures and to comply with current Provincial guidelines that may be in place.
- Ensure that patrons lining up to enter do not come close to customers already dining.
- Consider taking reservations only, as opposed to walk-in business. This will help to monitor capacity and ensure physical distancing is maintained.
- If possible, do not use entrance points as exit points, other than in an emergency. This will help to facilitate the one-way flow of foot traffic.
- To reduce crowding, establish a system for patrons to line up in order to gain access into the establishment.
 - Patrons must maintain physical distance of two metres or six feet between themselves and others in line.
 - Consider using signage or markers to assist patrons with practicing proper physical distancing while in line.
- COVID-19 [screening information should be posted](#) near entrance(s) to help patrons identify whether they should enter the space or [self-isolate](#) at home.
- Hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol content) must be located at the entrance and exit. Patrons and anyone else entering the establishment should wash or sanitize their hands upon entry.
- Consider displaying the Public Health Ontario [How to use hand sanitizer](#) poster.

Adjust the Space to Support Physical Distancing

Patron Space

- Re-arrange, remove, or mark some seating/tables as unavailable to patrons in order to allow for:
 - A minimum of two metres or six feet 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 any waiting area seating.
- Remove buffets and self-serve locations, if applicable.
 - Food should not be left out for patrons to serve themselves
 - Self-serve condiments should not be made available and should be provided to the patron upon request
- 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.

Staff Space

- Re-arrange equipment and/or processes in the kitchen and other areas used by staff so that a two metre or six-foot 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).
- If staff in staff only areas (not accessible to the public, i.e. staff lounge, stock area, offices, etc.) are unable to remain two metres (6 feet) apart, face coverings are strongly recommended.

Promote Good Hand and Respiratory Hygiene

- According to [Section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Class Order](#) alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol) must be available at all entrances and exits.
- Staff and patrons should be advised to practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. This includes:
 - Washing hands frequently with warm, soapy water and/or
 - Sanitizing hands frequently with hand sanitizer that has at least 60% alcohol content.
 - Respiratory etiquette includes coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow or disposable tissue.
- Owners/operators should consider posting the following sign from the Public Health Agency of Canada 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 which may cause hands to 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, as often as hands should be washed and upon becoming contaminated. Plastic, latex, and nitrile gloves are intended to be single-use only.

Non-medical Face Coverings (Section 22 Order)

- Ensure employees/customers adhere to [Section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Class Order](#) requiring staff and customers **inside** the public areas of a restaurant or food premise (e.g., washrooms, food pick-up, payment) to wear face coverings at all times.
- [People who are exempt](#) from wearing a face covering are:
 - Children under the age of two years
 - Children under the age of five years (either chronologically or developmentally) who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver
 - People whose ability to breathe in any way is inhibited by the face covering
 - People that have any other medical reason they cannot wear a face covering safely, such as, but not limited to, respiratory disease, cognitive difficulties or difficulties in hearing or processing information
- [Proof of exemption from mandatory face mask order not required](#)
- Face coverings are not required once [seated in an outdoor dining area](#) of the establishment
- Face coverings are required when inside a food establishment, [except while eating or drinking](#)
- Post [signs](#) at entrances to inform customers about the Section 22 Order
- 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.

Increase Cleaning and Disinfecting Practices

- Owners/operators should establish a plan to enhance cleaning and disinfecting practices in public areas

- Follow proper protocols for cleaning and sanitizing kitchen, food preparation and food-contact surfaces as required in the [Ontario Regulation 493/17 Food Premises](#).
- 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 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 re-mixed at least twice a day. [Health Canada](#) recommends diluted bleach be prepared according to the instructions on the label or, assuming the bleach is 5 per cent sodium hypochlorite, in a ratio of:
 - One teaspoon (5 mL) per cup (250 mL); or
 - Four teaspoons (20 mL) per litre (1000 mL).
- Please refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Canada](#) for cleaning and disinfection in public settings.
- Disinfectants, household cleaners, and bleach are meant to be used to clean surfaces. Never use these products on skin or internally (e.g., by swallowing or injecting these products) as this could cause serious harm. Ensure there is a process in place to verify appropriate concentration levels if the disinfectant is not already pre-mixed.
- Always read and follow manufacturers' instructions for safe use (e.g., wear gloves and use in well-ventilated area).

Implement Additional Safety Procedures for Staff and Patrons

For Staff

- Stagger shifts, lunches, and breaks times to prevent overlap and congestion of staff. Establish a plan to reduce or manage congestion effectively and support physical distancing.
- Establish consistent groups of staff 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 should ask their employees to complete a [health-screening tool](#) (or through the [Ontario online COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#)) before coming to work.
- 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 COVID-19 symptoms
 - If an employee/employer becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms while working, they should go home immediately and [self-isolate](#).
 - Employers/employees experiencing symptoms can call [Telehealth](#), their health care provider or an [assessment centre](#) for testing.
- Employers/employees should not work if they have traveled [outside of Canada](#) within the past 14 days.
- Establish criteria for employees who have been sick to return to work:
 - In general, if an employee had COVID-19 they are able to resume working following recommendations from public health which would include a 14-day isolation period from when symptoms began.
 - For other illnesses, or if the individual received a negative COVID-19 test, they should not come to work until they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours.
 - Clearance tests are not required for return to work.
 - For more information on what happens when an employee tests positive, please review [COVID-19 Guidance for Reopening Businesses](#).
- Require that staff limit the time they spend within two metres/six feet of patrons. This may include introducing new practices or procedures for interacting with and serving patrons.
- Encourage staff to wash their work clothes between use.
- Where feasible, owners/operators should consider implementing cashless/touchless payment systems or encouraging only debit or credit card payment. Proper handwashing/hand sanitizing must be practiced after each payment is processed.

For Patrons

- Record the name and contact information (phone number or email), date and time of visit for **at least one member of each party** of patrons that dines in your establishment. Establishments can [create their own logs](#) or [ask patrons to record their information](#). Use [signs](#) to inform patrons of this requirement.
- 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
- Do not pre-set 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, 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 prior to re-opening.
- Ensure all employees know to stay home if they think they have [COVID-19 symptoms](#), and report if they have symptoms while at work. Employees should be made aware of any procedures for reporting symptoms to management. Communicate regularly with employees who are off work and provide reinforcement that this is not to pressure the employees to return to work.
- 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](#)
- Owners/operators are required to maintain patron logs for **30 days** and should also maintain a log of staff. To help collect the information needed from patrons, owners/operators are encouraged to accept reservations only (versus walk-in business).
- Having this information will assist Public Health with close-contact tracing and communication should someone fall ill with COVID-19 or come into close contact with a person that has tested positive for COVID-19.
- 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**.

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](#);
 - [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 3](#);
 - [Ontario Regulation 263/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 2](#);
 - [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#); and
 - All other related laws and regulations.
- Owners/operators should also refer to guidance from the [Ministry of Labour](#). This Ministry guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from Public Health about food safety, or the Food Premises Regulation.

Other Resources

[A Framework for Reopening our Province – Stage 3](#)

[Reopening Ontario: Frequently asked questions about Stage 3](#)

[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 Reopening Businesses](#) (WDGPH)

[COVID-19 Checklist for Reopening Businesses & Workplaces](#) (WDGPH)

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

[Signs & Posters](#) (WDGPH)

Please review the [Food Premises and Events](#) section on our website for additional guidance documents.

If you have a specific question about food safety or inspections, or if you have a complaint about compliance with COVID-19 orders, 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 provide advice regarding your ability to operate and it remains the business' responsibility to ensure compliance with all applicable laws to operate at this time. These guidelines and resources should be reviewed and followed.

Adapted with permission from Toronto Public Health and Region of Waterloo Public Health