

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related Service

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Cobb & Douglas Public Health (CDPH) will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

Background

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel virus that has been spreading worldwide. Community-acquired cases have now been confirmed in Georgia. We are gaining more understanding of COVID-19's epidemiology, clinical course, immunogenicity, and other factors as time progresses, and the situation is changing daily. CDPH is in the process of monitoring COVID-19, conducting testing with local and state partners, and providing guidance and resources to prevent, detect and respond to the occurrence of COVID-19 cases in Cobb and Douglas Counties.

Illness Severity

The complete clinical picture regarding COVID-19 is not fully understood. Reported illnesses have ranged from mild to severe, including illness resulting in death. Older people and people with certain underlying health conditions like heart disease, lung disease and diabetes, for example, seem to be at greater risk of serious illness.

Context

Retail Food, Beverage, and Other Related service venues bring people from multiple communities into close contact with each other and have the potential to increase COVID-19 transmission. This guidance document describes steps that retail food, beverage, and other related service venue owners and management should take for the protection of patrons to prevent further COVID-19 transmission. This is not an exhaustive list of all food and beverage sites that should utilize social distancing and does not relate to manufacturing or production of beer and wine. The CDPH guidance has sanitation, personal hygiene, and social distancing as an important foundation for the prevention of COVID-19 in these venues.

The goals of these actions are: (1) to protect people attending and working at the venue and the local community from COVID-19 infection; and (2) to reduce community transmission and introductions of COVID-19 into new communities.

Per the Governor's Executive Order on 4/2/2020, please see the attached link for a list of FAQs and 16 measures to mitigate the COVID-19 transmission:

<https://gov.georgia.gov/press-releases/2020-04-02/governor-kemp-issues-shelter-place-order>

Retail Beverage Service Venues

- Bars, wineries, breweries and pubs should be closed, except for venues that are currently authorized to provide sealed beer and wine to be consumed off premises.
- This guidance is not intended to affect production of beer and wine.
- Bars, breweries, pubs, and wineries that include meals provided by a full kitchen should follow the restaurant guidance below if they provide delivery or pick-up.

Retail Food Sales/Food Service and Other Related Service

Advice for Customers:

- Go shopping at a time that's less busy. If you type in the store's name and location in Google search, a box often will pop up showing when foot traffic there is highest, so that you can avoid those times.
- Take germicide with you. Use it to wipe your hands and the cart before and after you shop.
- Use a credit or debit card. That way, you don't have to hand over bills or receive change. Also, use your own pen to sign receipts. If you can, use a virtual payment system like Apple Pay/Google Pay so that you don't have to open your wallet at all.

If Getting Food Delivered:

- Avoid a direct hand-off. Arrange to have the items delivered to your doorstep or a place nearby instead.
- Tip electronically. One benefit of ordering deliveries online or via an app is that you don't have to hand the delivery person money. Opportunities to tip the delivery person are included in most of the delivery apps and online ordering systems.
- Order earlier than you usually do. Though it's not a safety issue, you may find that during this crisis you have to wait longer.
- When receiving food, put groceries away or open restaurant containers, then thoroughly wash hands prior to serving or eating food.

Restaurants/Cafeterias

- Restaurants should be closed for seated dining and should be open only to drive-through or other pick-up/delivery options.
- Remind employees of best hygiene practices including washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, staying home when ill and maintaining at least 6 feet between individuals.
- Increase frequency of cleaning and sanitizing per CDC Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection guidance of all hard surfaces, including tables and counter tops that are being utilized by employees and patrons during pickup/delivery options.

Food Trucks

- Increase frequency of cleaning of menus, cash registers, receipt trays, condiment holders, writing instruments and other non-food contact surfaces frequently touched by patrons and employees.
- Ensure that social distancing of six feet per person for non-family members is maintained.
- Limit the number of people in lines (e.g., only have 1 person per family step up to order while other family members stand aside).

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- Remind employees of best hygiene practices including washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and staying home when ill.

Grocery Stores and Charitable Food Distribution Sites

- The food distribution chain is critical to the public's health. Grocery stores and charitable food distribution sites should remain open and operational.
- Expand and promote curbside or delivery practices in lieu of in-store shopping.
- Prohibit self-serve foods, including hot bars, cold bars and buffets. Prohibit product sampling.
- Apply the social distancing recommendations to any lines that form inside or outside of the store. In areas of high-volume traffic, utilize spacing tools for checks and lines. Put tape/cones on the floor to keep customers adequately spaced 6 feet apart.
- Limit the number of customers at any given time as necessary to reduce outdoor/indoor crowding and lines to meet social distancing guidance (e.g., limit 1 person per family to shop on behalf of the family).
- Calculate the maximum number of individuals allowed in the store at any given time by taking the WALKABLE square footage in the store divided by 36 feet).
- If the maximum amount of people is in the store, form a line outside the store with cones or tape on the ground separated by 6 feet for customers to wait. Once a customer leaves, a new customer can enter.
- Consider going to self-service checkout only.
- Switch to a credit card only payment so money does not have to be handled. The more things are touched, the higher the risk to everyone.
- Offer designated shopping hours for customers at high risk (e.g., people with underlying health conditions, people 60 or older, those with weakened immune systems or those who are pregnant). Assure that shopping hours are sufficient to assure that social distancing can certainly be maintained with this group.
- Temporarily assign employees at high risk for COVID-19 (e.g., people with certain underlying health conditions, people 60 or older, those with weakened immune systems or those who are pregnant) to non-public-contact duties/teleworking per the Governor's Executive Order.
- Provide alcohol based (60%) hand sanitizers for use for both employees and customers by placing them at convenient/accessible locations.
- Always appoint a designated sanitation worker to continuously clean and sanitize commonly touched surfaces and meet the environmental cleaning guidelines set by the CDC.
- Consider reducing hours that the store is open to allow for extended stocking demands and extra cleaning daily.
- Frequently sanitize commonly touched surfaces and objects such as electronics, doorknobs, faucet handles, counter tops, cash machine keypads, shopping cart handles frequently throughout the day. Change the sanitizing solution at least once every four hours.
- Ensure that employees practice washing their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for 20 seconds upon first arriving to work, after using the restroom,

- before and after eating and frequently throughout the day. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Stay home when ill.
- Medical masks/gloves are NOT recommended for healthy workers. They can give a false sense of security, still become contaminated and use up precious medical supplies. Social distancing and hand washing are best. If workers would like to protect others if they themselves may be sick but asymptomatic, then a “face covering” (not N95 or surgical mask, not gloves) is allowable but do not use medical supplies.
 - Ensure there is a way to sanitize shopping cart and basket handles – either by making wipes easily accessible to customers or by having employees manage the process and sanitize between each customer use with wipes or a bleach-based disinfectant.
 - Prominently display signage in the store, send customer and employee emails, and post information on company website that communicates the steps being taken to minimize the risk of COVID-19. Sample signs are found here: <https://kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novel-coronavirus/posters.aspx> (samples from Seattle and King County Public Health). Make periodic in-store announcements over public address (PA) system reminding shoppers to remember their social distancing guidelines.

Certified Farmers’ Markets

- Space booths accordingly to increase social distancing among patrons in line and walking about the market.
- Ensure that social distancing of six feet per person.
- Limit the number of customers at any given time as necessary to reduce outdoor/indoor crowding and lines to meet social distancing guidance.
- Increase cleaning and sanitizing frequency of restroom and other high contact areas.
- Train employees on best hygiene practices including washing their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and not coming to work when ill.
- Offer additional hand washing or sanitizing stations throughout the venue.
- Eliminate events/marketing that target individuals that the CDPH has identified as higher risk of serious illness for COVID-19.
- Encourage activities such as pre-bagging to expedite purchasing.
- Suspend food and beverage sampling activities.
- Increase frequency of cleaning of tables, payment devices, and other surfaces.
- Eliminate non-essential/non-related services, such as bands or other entertainment, and other non-food vendors.
- At the end of the market, continue to utilize local food recovery systems to feed/donate extra products to populations in need.
- If applicable, continue accepting EBT payment.

Other Information

- The CDC, FDA and CDPH are not aware of any reports at this time that suggest COVID-19 can be transmitted by food or food packaging.
- General guidance for employers and workers can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>