



# Outdoor Dining and Patios

This tip sheet is intended for employers, workers and guests of outdoor dining.

In all cases, guidance from local public health authorities must be followed and general COVID-19 prevention practices should be implemented, as outlined in:

<https://www.ccohs.ca/pdfs/covid-general.pdf>.

## Consider the Risks

The spread of COVID-19 increases in situations involving close interactions with others, in closed spaces and crowded places. The chances of COVID-19 spreading during these activities depends on the number and characteristics of people who attend (e.g. age, maturity, physical ability, comprehension), proximity, durations of interactions between people, as well as the measures put in place by employers.

Each restaurant providing outdoor dining may have unique situations such as limited outdoor space or permit requirements. Employers are encouraged to complete a risk assessment for each interaction and implement measures to control the spread.

Make sure staff and guests know of the preventative measures in place before they arrive on-site.

Meeting people outside your immediate household at a restaurant is a high risk activity.

Outdoor dining may be less risky than dining indoors due to natural ventilation, however, the benefit of eating outdoors can be greatly reduced or eliminated if the outdoor dining structure is partially or completely enclosed.

Allow air to flow freely through the outdoor dining space.

## Recommendations for Outdoor Dining

Refer to the [restaurants tip sheet](#) for additional tips.

### Communication

- Clearly communicate to your workers and guests any new practices and policies that may affect their experience.
- In colder weather, inform guests to bring blankets and wear multiple layers of clothing to enjoy outdoor dining. Blankets should not be shared between guests from different households.
- Consider sharing such information online, through advertisements, with notices at the front doors, and verbally by staff.
- Post signs for workers, guests, and others (e.g. contractors) not to enter the restaurant or dining areas if they may be sick, suspect they may have been exposed, or have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days.
- Help guests understand that protective measures and any reduced services (e.g., coat check) are necessary, and that their dining experience might be different. Ask them to be considerate of workers and other guests.
- Consider using an online reservation system to help manage the number of guests and to reduce waiting.
- Post signs throughout the restaurant to encourage physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting of equipment, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Make sure communication is suitable for people's age, ability, reading level and language preferences.

### Engineering Controls

- Install physical barriers, one-way routes, floor markings, and other visual cues where appropriate throughout the restaurant and dining areas to manage crowds and to promote physical distancing.
- Restrict access to areas of the premises that people do not need to go.
- Install plexiglass or other solid barriers between pieces of equipment, at greeting stands, payment windows that are appropriately sized to provide protection to your workers (refer to local public health guidance for details).
- Reduce the number of surfaces that need to be touched to access the outdoor dining area and washrooms, for example, by installing automatic doors or propping non-fire doors open.



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## Administrative Controls

- Implement a policy for what is expected of employees if they get sick, have symptoms, receive a positive COVID-19 test or result, or if an exposure is reported involving a staff member, contractor or guest.
- Encourage employees to only work at one location and assign cohort groups of workers to the same shifts every week if possible.
- Stagger start, end and break times to limit the number of employees at entrances and break rooms.
- Make sure employees are trained to work safely including when replacing the duties of others.
- If there are fewer employees available, make sure essential roles such as trained supervision, and first aid or emergency response persons are still present.
- Minimize contact when reporting to work. Have the supervisor sign in for people (or provide separate pens), or have people text the supervisor. Clean any sign-in devices between users.
- Use videoconferencing or teleconferencing for meetings and gatherings. If this is not possible, hold meetings in open, well-ventilated spaces or outside. Maintain physical distancing and wear masks as necessary.
- Remove communal coat check areas and shared footwear or clothing. Allow employees to store their personal items separately or in sealed bins or bags if they do not have lockers.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes and high fives.
- Consider on-line reservations and staggered times for dining.
- Ensure guests remain seated for the duration of their dining experience.
- Make sure to keep walkways and entrances to the outdoor dining spaces free of slip and trip hazards and other obstructions.
- Provide a waiting area outdoors if it is safe to do so.

## Physical Distancing

- Follow the occupancy limits required by your jurisdiction. Set up dining area to promote at least 2 meters distance between dining groups.
- Limit the number of customers allowed into the washroom at one time, or close alternating stalls.
- Do not allow customers to re-arrange seating such as moving chairs or tables closer together.
- Leave one seat location at each table empty to allow the server access to the table. Deliver food and beverages to the edge of the table at this open spot.
- Ensure that servers have ample room to move between tables without coming close to customers.
- If standing is allowed, create separate physical distancing zones (by having markings on the floor). Discourage customers from standing in crowded groups and interacting with other customers outside of their party.
- Consider how guests will leave the area in the event of an emergency.
- Block off some seating areas (e.g., waiting areas) to promote physical distancing between people.
- Prepare for exceptions to distancing guidance:
  - Anyone rescuing a distressed person, providing first aid, or performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation, with or without an automated external defibrillator. Recommendations for Restaurant Patios

## Outdoor Structures (e.g., tent, pergola, awning) and Weather Considerations

- Obtain required permits, if required, before putting up an outdoor structure. Follow all manufacturer instructions and local regulations (fire and building codes) to ensure the structure is safe to use.
- Be aware and follow municipal requirements regarding the number of open sides the structure must have and distance it must be from other structures.
- Make sure the structure is capable of withstanding high winds, inclement weather and snow without collapsing. Check the structure regularly to ensure it is still safe and stable.
- Public property should not be damaged when installing the structure(s) i.e., do not anchor directly into sidewalks or streets.
- If outdoor dining space is completely enclosed, make sure it is properly ventilated and is large enough for the planned number of tables and seats.
- Ensure that single-party enclosures are thoroughly ventilated between parties.
- Do not seat people in outdoor dining areas during inclement weather.
- Follow municipal snow removal requirements for outdoor dining spaces.

## Space Heaters

- Flame heaters should not be used under any covered spaces (e.g., pergola, awning, tent), they create a carbon monoxide poisoning risk if not properly exhausted.
- Only use heaters that have been certified by nationally recognized organizations such as Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA).
- Train staff on the safe installation, placement, storage and operation of the heater including refueling procedures, electrical cord management and emergency responses.



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## Screening and Contact Tracing

- Screen workers, guests, and others before anyone enters the restaurant including the outdoor dining area. Use a checklist from your local public health authority or have them complete a questionnaire.
- Record the names and contact information of all individuals (including vendors and contractors) who enter to assist with contact tracing by the local public health authority, if needed. Make sure that privacy is protected, and that the information is stored in a safe and secure manner. Contact information should be properly destroyed as required by local privacy laws.
- Establish procedures for people that do not pass screening or become ill while dining. They should wear a mask (if not already doing so), return home, preferably not by public transit, and call their health care provider or local public health authority for further instruction.

## Personal Hygiene

- Hand wash and sanitizer stations should be well stocked and easy to find near the entrance and other appropriate areas. Make sure they are accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Everyone should perform hand hygiene when entering and exiting the restaurant, after using washrooms, before and after touching shared objects and surfaces and after contact with another person.
- Encourage good respiratory etiquette. Everyone should sneeze or cough into a tissue or into the bend of their arm instead of their hands.
- Encourage use of tissues and other means to prevent the spread of bodily fluids.
- Immediately dispose of used tissues in lined garbage cans and follow up with hand hygiene.

## Cleaning and Disinfection

Follow general cleaning guidance found here: <https://www.ccohs.ca/pdfs/covid-general.pdf>.

- Restaurants should focus on door handles, seats and tables, food and drink preparation equipment, waste and recycling bins, touch screens, payment pads, tellers and frequently used office equipment (pens, tools, phones, radios, keyboards, mice, etc.).
- High transmission risk objects and surfaces should be disinfected between users or multiple times a day. Alternatively, make those objects single use.
- Use a disinfectant or bleach solution to destroy or inactivate the virus. Use a disinfectant with a drug identification number (DIN), meaning it has been approved for use in Canada.
- Train all employees on the safe use of all cleaners, refer to product labels and Safety Data Sheets for details.
- Ensure washrooms are cleaned and disinfected frequently, have running water and a plastic lined waste container.

**For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada**  
<https://www.ccohs.ca/images/products/pandemiccovid19/pdf/cleaning-disinfecting.pdf>

**Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.**

**Disclaimer:** As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.