

# COVID-19 advice and FAQs

Information for EHOs and food businesses

## Advice for EHOs and food businesses

### Key messages

- Everyone should practice good hygiene when preparing and handling food.
- Practice good hand hygiene – wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds.
- Good manufacturing practices – clean and sanitize food preparation surfaces.
- There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through food.
- Normal cleaning and sanitation measures will minimize the risk in a food service settings.

## FAQs

### Do tables need to be 1 meter apart in cafes and restaurants?

The current advice is to practice social distancing. That means, just as it sounds, to create more space between each other in social situations. Placing tables at least one meter apart will help customers feel comfortable and achieve the social distancing currently advised. Some food businesses won't need to do anything as they already meet the distances, others might need to rearrange tables and chairs.

### Can COVID-19 be spread by foodborne transmission?

There is currently no evidence that food is a likely source or route of transmission of the virus.

EFSA's chief scientist, Marta Hugas said:

'Experiences from previous outbreaks of related coronaviruses, such as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), show that transmission through food consumption did not occur. There is currently no evidence to suggest that coronavirus is any different in this respect.' (<<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/news/coronavirus-no-evidence-food-source-or-transmission-route>>)

### How long does COVID-19 last on surfaces?

According to the World Health Organization, it is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses (including preliminary information on the COVID-19 virus) may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

If you think a surface may be contaminated, clean it with a common household disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

## Can coronavirus survive on crockery and cutlery?

While we are still finding out about the characteristics of the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), we do know quite a bit about other related coronaviruses, which are likely to be similar in terms of susceptibility to inactivation.

Coronaviruses are enveloped viruses. The envelope surrounds the entire virus and without an intact envelope, the virus loses its infectivity (ability to infect a cell).

The envelope is a relatively delicate structure and makes the virus more susceptible to degradation in the environment. Due to the delicate nature of the viral envelope, coronaviruses are relatively sensitive to both heat and detergents (including soap).

For this reason, normal washing of dishes in hot water (or better still, a dishwasher) using detergent is likely to completely inactivate any coronavirus present.

## Should food businesses use disposables instead?

There is currently no evidence to suggest there is any benefit in switching to disposables. It is important that the measures we take to minimise transmission are effective. The most effective measures you can take are practising good hand hygiene and cleaning, with particular focus on shared, frequently touched surfaces.

## What happens if a food business employee tests positive?

If you start feeling unwell, you can find the most up to date information here

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

Cleaning procedures for different businesses can be found here

<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2020/03/environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-principles-for-covid-19.pdf>

## What should a food business do to protect against coronavirus?

Food businesses can continue to practice good food handling hygiene. Resources can be found here

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/factsheets/keep-hands-clean-and-food-safe-posters>

Be aware of how used dishes are collected from a table. Minimising the risk of cross contamination by avoiding touching areas that have been in direct contact with the customer or food.

More frequent cleaning of shared surfaces, this could include door handles (front door, fridge/freezers, toilets/bathrooms), tables and chairs (arm rests or areas used to pull out the chair) salt and pepper shakers, sugar bowls, communal cutlery containers, eftpos keypad.

## Where can I find more information?

- National Coronavirus Health Information Line 1800 020 080
- Visit Vic Health <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>
- FSANZ <https://www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/Pages/NOVEL-CORONAVIRUS-AND-FOOD-SAFETY.aspx>
- Visit the [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/)

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