



# RIDOH Food Establishment Advisory

**April 5, 2020**

## **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Bulk Food Sales from Restaurants Guidance**

Food has not been identified as a likely source of COVID-19 at this time; however, food businesses can play an important role in protecting their employees and their customers from COVID-19 by following food safety guidelines. The following are guidelines for food businesses who wish to sell bulk food products to the public.

- Sales may be done by customer curbside pickup, takeout, or if the establishment can transport safely, by delivery.
- Potentially hazardous food products, whether cooked or raw, must be kept under temperature control at all times (as the product leaves the establishment, during transport, and at customer receipt).
- If the product has been cooked but is sold cold, it must have been properly cooled before leaving the establishment.
- Bulk foods must be protected from contamination at all times, including during preparation, packaging, and delivery.
- Bulk food products should not be so large as to not fit in a household refrigerator.

These guidelines are crucial for foods that are time- and/or temperature-controlled for safety.

**Below are guidelines that businesses selling bulk food should follow to protect both employees and customers:**

- Strengthen health screening of staff and onsite contractors for COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle aches (myalgias), chills, runny nose or stuffy nose, sore throat, headache, or diarrhea (people with COVID-19 have experienced a range of different symptoms. As we learn more about the virus, we know that some people with COVID-19 have only experienced one or two mild symptoms); travel history (any domestic or international travel in the last 14 days); or exposure to a known or suspected case of COVID-19.
- Wash your 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.
- Provide alcohol-based (at least 60% alcohol) hand sanitizers or similar cleaners for use by both employees and customers by placing them at convenient/accessible locations.
- Use sanitizing solution (i.e., one teaspoon of unscented household bleach in a gallon of cool water; there is no need to change the ratio of bleach to water to kill the virus. If in doubt, please follow the instructions on the bottle) to frequently sanitize commonly touched surfaces and objects such as cash machine keypads, counter tops, dining tables, doorknobs, electronics, faucet handles, and menus frequently throughout the day. Change the chlorine-based sanitizing solution at least once every four hours.
- Ensure dishwasher and/or three-compartment sinks are used properly and have the appropriate level of sanitizer for final rinse (50-100 PPM chlorine-based sanitizer; follow product label for other approved sanitizers).
- Ensure sneeze guards are in place where required.
- If you have food employees at higher risk for COVID-19, such as people age 60 or older, people with underlying health conditions (such as heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes), people with weakened immune systems, or, out of an abundance of caution, people who are pregnant and who may be more susceptible to viral respiratory infections: consider temporarily re-assigning them to non-public-contact duties.

**FDA and CDC Guidance for Food Establishments for Coronavirus Disease 2019**

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is working with U.S. government partners including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to closely monitor and mitigate the effects of an outbreak caused by coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). For the most recent FDA updates, please visit: [Coronavirus Disease 2019](#). For more information specific to Rhode Island, please visit [COVID-19: Rhode Island Department of Health](#). Below is a list of frequently asked questions put together by the FDA:

**Q: Is food imported to the United States from China and other countries affected by coronavirus**

**disease 2019 (COVID-19), at risk of spreading COVID-19?**

A: Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 associated with imported goods and there are no reported cases of COVID-19 in the United States associated with imported goods.

**Q: Are food products produced in the United States at risk for the spread of COVID-19?**

A: There is no evidence to suggest that food produced in the United States can transmit COVID-19.

**Q: Can I get sick with COVID-19 from touching food, the food packaging, or food contact surfaces, if the coronavirus was present on it?**

A: Currently there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. Like other viruses, it is possible that the virus that causes COVID-19 can survive on surfaces or objects. For that reason, it is critical to follow the four key steps of food safety—clean, separate, cook, and chill.

**Q: Can I get COVID-19 from a food worker handling my food?**

A: Currently, there is no evidence of food or food packaging being associated with transmission of COVID-19. However, the virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from person-to-person in some communities in the U.S. The CDC recommends that if you are sick, stay home until you are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others. Anyone handling, preparing, or serving food should always follow safe food handling procedures, such as washing hands and surfaces often.

**Q: Should food workers who are ill stay home?**

A: According to [CDC guidance \[health.us2.list-manage.com\]](https://www.cdc.gov/health-us-2019-nCoV/list-manage.com), food workers suspected to have COVID-19, but who have not been tested, can return to work after the following criteria have been met:

- No fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use medicine that reduces fevers),  
AND
- other symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath has improved),  
AND
- at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.

**Food workers who have previously tested positive for COVID-19 can return to work after the following criteria have been met:**

- No fever (without the use medicine that reduces fevers),  
AND
- other symptoms have improved (for example, cough or shortness of breath has improved),  
AND

- received two negative tests in a row, 24 hours apart.

Also, for general information regarding food employee health not related to COVID-19, see the [FDA's Retail Food Protection: Employee Health and Personal Hygiene Handbook. \[health.us2.list-manage.com\]](#)

**Q: Should food facilities (grocery stores, manufacturing facilities, restaurants, etc.) perform any special cleaning or sanitation procedures for COVID-19?**

A: CDC recommends routine cleaning of all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. CDC does not recommend any additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning at this time.

View the EPA-registered disinfectant products on the [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 list \[health.us2.list-manage.com\]](#) that have qualified under EPA's emerging viral pathogen program for use against SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Restaurants and retail food establishments are regulated at the state and local level. State, local, and tribal regulators use the Food Code published by the FDA to develop or update their own food safety rules. Generally, FDA-regulated food manufacturers are required to maintain clean facilities, including, as appropriate, clean and sanitized food contact surfaces, and to have food safety plans in place. Food safety plans include a hazards analysis and risk-based preventive controls and include procedures for maintaining clean and sanitized facilities and food contact surfaces. See: [FSMA Final Rule for Preventive Controls for Human Food. \[health.us2.list-manage.com\]](#)

**Q: Since restaurant workers and other service industry employees have ongoing contact with the public, are there any special precautions these workers should take to avoid becoming sick with a respiratory illness, such as wearing masks?**

A: CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers and people who are taking care of someone with COVID-19 in close settings (at home or in a health care facility).

As a reminder, the CDC recommends everyday preventive actions for everyone, including service industry workers and customers:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

For the latest information, please visit the [Rhode Island Department of Health COVID-19 web page \[health.us2.list-manage.com\]](#); call RIDOH's COVID-19 Hotline at 401-222-8022 or 211 after hours; or email [RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov](mailto:RIDOH.COVID19Questions@health.ri.gov).