

COVID -19 Virus and Food Handling Guidance

The advice to all community food projects is to maintain strict hygiene practices and safety standards.

Anyone handling food should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This should be done as a matter of routine, before and after handling food, and especially after being in a public place, blowing their nose, touching their face, coughing, or sneezing.

Opportunities for the virus to spread need to be minimised. This can be achieved by staff/volunteers and beneficiaries practicing social distancing of at least 2 metres at all times.

There is currently no evidence that food is a source of COVID-19 and it is very unlikely it can be transmitted through the consumption of food, according to [EFSA \(European Food Safety Authority\)](#).

COVID -19 virus is commonly passed on:

- Directly, through contact with an infected person's body fluids (for example, droplets from coughing or sneezing)
- Indirectly, through contact with surfaces that an infected person has coughed or sneezed on.

Preventing the spread of COVID-19

- Follow the guidance from Government on [good hygiene for food businesses](#)
- Infected people or people with [symptoms of Covid-19](#) should not work at all. [Follow government advice and stay at home.](#)
- If an infected worker handles food it is possible that the virus could be introduced to surfaces by coughing, sneezing, or through hand contact.
- If a member of staff has helped someone who was taken unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, they do not need to go home unless they develop symptoms themselves. They should [wash their hands thoroughly for 20 seconds](#) after any contact with someone who is unwell with symptoms consistent with coronavirus infection.
- Exercise [proper hand hygiene](#)/hand-washing whether using gloves or not. If using gloves, hand washing should be carried out before putting gloves on, between glove changes and after gloves are removed. ([WHO advice on use of gloves](#))
- Wash hands thoroughly throughout the preparation/handling of food, in particular:
 - after coughing or sneezing
 - after going to the toilet
 - before eating and drinking
 - After touching eyes, nose and mouth

- Alcohol based (at least 60%) hand sanitiser gels can be used in addition to hand washing, but they only work on clean hands. They should never be used as a substitute to hand washing.
- Display posters on etiquette when coughing/sneezing and applying [‘Catch it, Kill it, Bin it’](#) guidance
- Frequent washing and sanitising of all food contact surfaces and utensils. Example, ladles, tongs, condiment holders etc. Follow manufactures advice on how to use cleaning product
- Touch points e.g. fridge handles, kitchen cabinet handles, keypads, door handles etc., should be cleaned more frequently.
- Keep doors open where possible to minimise contact.

Social Distancing

- Limit the number of staff in a kitchen and food preparation area at any one time to practice social distancing
- Space out workstations and food preparation areas, if possible by 2-3 meters
- Limit the number of people (staff, delivery drivers, customers, beneficiaries) who come into the premises at any one time to prevent overcrowding.

Food hygiene guidance

- Ensure community chefs/volunteers preparing food have completed [food hygiene training](#)
- Community food services preparing food, should follow the Food Standard Agency’s [guidance on good hygiene practices](#) in food preparation and their [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point \(HACCP\) processes](#).
- Soap, washing-up liquid and dishwasher detergents are likely to inactivate the virus. In particular, washing and drying dishes/utensils in a dishwasher at 60°C or higher is effective at eliminating any risk.
- [Clean food preparation/serving/collection areas after every session](#). Cleaning with normal household disinfectant will reduce the risk of the infection spreading.

Food collection service:

- Use additional signage asking people not to enter the premises if they have [symptoms](#)
- Provide additional ‘pop-up’ hand washing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and hand sanitiser* encouraging people to clean their hands on their way in and out of the premises. **An alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol should be used.*
- Regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded, examples include: using floor markings inside the premises or a ticket system to facilitate compliance with social distancing, particularly in the most crowded areas, such as serving/collection points.

- Limit the number of people allowed on the premises. For example, use vertical signage to direct people into lanes to facilitate movement within the premises while maintaining 2-metre distance
- Any queues to the premises need to maintain the 2 metre distance.
- Make regular announcements to remind all to follow social distancing advice and clean their hands regularly
- If feasible, place plexiglass barriers at serving counters/collection points, as an additional element of protection for workers and recipients
- Avoid open food displays
- Consider having a reduced number of sessions per week. For example, pre packed food boxes could be collected on set days/times in the week rather than every day.
- Limit the range of food items on offer or only offer a small range of standardised packages to prevent cross contamination and to minimise the time spent at the premises
- Consider offering cold foods unless hot food is essential. [Full guidance here](#)
- Consider providing vegetarian meals (no eggs, fish, meat) to reduce the risk of food poisoning
- Food that is ready to eat (hot or cold) must be placed in a plastic container with a firm lid which must not be re-used again to avoid contamination
- Food allergen information must be provided. This information must be provided before the food is distributed **and** at the point of delivery/collection. [Further information on allergens](#)

Cleaning and waste disposal

- The government has provided guidance for non -clinical settings on [cleaning and waste disposal](#) to help reduce the spread of coronavirus.

Managing transport and delivery of food

Transport containers must:	Transport vehicles must:
Be kept clean and in good condition to protect food from contamination	Be kept clean and in good condition
Be easy to clean and/or disinfect	Allow for the separation of foods from other goods that may cause contamination. For example, plants or cleaning chemicals
Not be used to transport goods other than foods where this could be a source of contamination	Allow for separation of raw foods that require cooking from foods that will not be cooked before eating
Allow for separation of food from non-food items, like detergents and toiletries. For example by bagging non-food items.	Be thoroughly cleaned if used for goods other than food to ensure no contamination
Allow for separation of raw foods that require cooking from foods that will not be cooked before eating	

Temperature control

- Food must be kept at the correct temperature during transportation to prevent the growth of food poisoning bacteria.
- Make sure containers/vehicles used for transport or deliveries can maintain the above temperatures. This can be done using either refrigeration or insulated containers.
- The Food Standards Agency (FSA) have provided advice for business - [How to manage a food business if you sell products online, for takeaway or for delivery](#).

Delivery driver/personnel

- Should follow guidance on social distancing when collecting food items and delivering to recipients
- Maintain a high degree of personal cleanliness
- Sanitise hands before and after each delivery transaction
- The use of gloves is not recommended as this can give a false sense of security. Hand washing/sanitising is best practice
- When delivering food, wash or sanitise hands, knock on the door, leave the food by the door, step away at least 2 meters, wait to see that the parcel is acknowledged and collected by the recipient and finally sanitise hands once in the vehicle.

Further Information

[COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) and food from the European Food Safety Authority](#)

[WHO guidance on getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#)

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/2020/03/23/14922/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19#maintaining-social-distancing-in-specific-food-business-settings>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

[Safe food practices](#)

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