



Best Practices for Businesses to Reopen **RESTAURANTS AND BARS**



OPEN FOR RESTAURANTS AND BARS

- Develop a plan or checklist for reopening consistent with [CDC](#), [FDA](#), and [National Restaurant Association](#) guidance that includes:
 - Staff training
 - Leave policies, absenteeism plans, and employee screenings
 - Facial covering requirements for patrons and staff
 - Physical facility evaluation for any damage or issues caused by vacancy. Follow [CDC](#) and [Maryland Department of the Environment](#) guidance on reopening buildings, including checking mechanical, air, and water/ice systems. Ensure all water lines are flushed, including equipment water lines and connections, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
 - Social distancing protocols and procedures for staff, vendors, and patrons, with special consideration for entrances and exits, queues, bottlenecks, facility layouts, and safe capacity limits
 - Communications and signage
 - Routine and frequent environmental cleaning and disinfecting, especially for high-touch surfaces, in accordance with [CDC recommendations](#)
- Develop a plan for vendors to bring products safely into the business by arranging for deliveries when there are the fewest customers and employees.
- Establish procedures for third-party food delivery businesses to safely pick up orders while adhering to COVID-19 prevention precautions. Communicate these procedures directly with each business and/or with signage.
- Determine the capacity of both indoor (Max of 50%) and outdoor dining. An "indoor area" means all space in a structure or a building with a ceiling that is enclosed on all sides by any combination of permanent or temporary walls, windows or doorways, whether opened or closed, or other physical barriers extending from floor to ceiling.
- Check with your local health department for any additional requirements in your jurisdiction, or if you have questions, especially if modifying operations (such as adding outdoor dining).
- Encourage employees to maintain social distancing, including during breaks, and modify procedures to avoid staff congregation.
- Train employees on the proper responses to customers who challenge social distancing, facial covering, and other protocols.
- Face coverings are required when interacting with other staff or guests, particularly if social distancing cannot be assured.
- Employees should wear gloves when removing food service items and wash their hands immediately afterwards.
- Wait and order stations should be wiped down after each use and those tools and equipment that are shared should be sanitized prior to giving to another employee and at the beginning and end of each shift.



OPEN FOR EMPLOYEES

- Employees should be trained in and understand current COVID-19 health and workplace guidelines, such as hand hygiene and cleaning protocols, along with proper PPE use and disposal.
- Implement a daily screening process for workers, which includes [CDC](#) or MDH recommended health questions, and consider temperature testing.
- Direct sick workers to follow [CDC](#) and state guidelines regarding home isolation for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections and returning to work.



OPEN FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING

- Establish a 6-foot marking system to visually demonstrate the recommended social distancing at all locations where customers and staff congregate.
- Modify floor plans to ensure patrons are seated at least 6 feet away from each other, except for households or a group seated together. For facilities with booth seating, the social distance of 6 feet must be maintained by closing every other booth.
- Designate and signpost the direction of foot traffic in main circulation paths. Consider one-way circulation routes.



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- Minimize congregating in common areas through signage, floor markings, barriers, and employee communications. Restrict access to areas where social distancing and social gathering requirements cannot be followed.
- No more than six people may be seated at a table.
- Customers need to be seated at the bar or at a table to be served and must comply with the appropriate social distancing guideline of at least 6 feet. Standing should not be permitted.
- Use a reservation system wherever possible to avoid crowding. Use phone apps, texting, or signs to let patrons know when their table or carryout order is ready. Avoid the use of pagers.
- Prepare guidance on facility capacity, how customers queue in and outside of the facility, and curbside pickup. Be mindful of creating situations that might cause lines and crowds.
- Post signage advising customers to not enter the establishment if they are sick or symptomatic. Provide a phone number or website for alternative purchasing methods, such as carryout or delivery, which should be encouraged.
- If possible, set aside special hours for vulnerable or at-risk customers.



OPEN FOR CLEANLINESS AND COMFORT

- Frequently clean and disinfect facilities per [CDC guidelines](#), particularly high touch areas, and every table after each use. Use cleaners appropriate for food contact surfaces that still meet the [EPA criteria](#) for use against COVID-19.
- When removing soft goods from the table, place in a tote to await laundry service and launder the soft goods in the warmest water possible.
- The use of buffets or similar serving format shall not be used at this time.
- For customer comfort, place table settings after the party is seated, provide condiments in either single use containers or disinfected manufactured packaging. Use menu boards, disposable menus, or mobile ordering apps. If a facility uses regular menus, they must be cleaned and sanitized between each customer's use.
- Multi-use amenities and unnecessary items such as magazines, coupons, menus and brochures should be removed from areas open to the public.
- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees and customers, particularly at key patron and employee entrances and contact areas where guests are likely to congregate.
- Where possible, implement and encourage touchless payment.



OPEN FOR COMMUNICATIONS

- Employees and customers should continue to wear facial coverings where applicable or required; removal of masks is appropriate when customers are consuming food and beverage.
- Provide disposable hand towels and trash bins in restrooms, so that customers can exit the restrooms without touching doors handles with clean bare hands.
- Communicate commitment to cleanliness by posting compliance adherence with the [CDC's guidelines](#).
- Show customers care by having signage that details social distancing protocol and COVID-19 prevention.
- Communicate with employees and guests on the measures taken for their comfort and on the shared responsibility to monitor their health and stay home if not feeling well.
- Communicate to guests in advance or during the reservation process about any changes to their dining experience, including procedures for seating, serving, ordering, paying and wearing face coverings.
- Prior to the guest's visit, if possible, explain processes in place for their comfort, which includes social distancing, and increased hygiene practices per the [CDC](#) and MDH guidance and that you are open for business.

All Executive Orders still in effect must be complied with. See most up to date orders here: governor.maryland.gov/covid-19-pandemic-orders-and-guidance.