

COVID-19 ADVICE FOR FOOD BUSINESSES

Protection measures against the spread of COVID-19 have recently been enacted which place restrictions on the way some businesses operate. Restaurants, cafes and other “sit in” eateries are now only allowed to offer food as take away and/or home delivery.

Key messages

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

Can COVID-19 pass through food?

There is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 is passed on through food. The main risk of transmission is from close contact with infected people. The advice to food businesses and consumers is to maintain good hygiene practices and to wash your hands regularly. Thorough cooking will kill the virus.

Current information suggests that the virus could survive up to 72 hours (3 days) on hard surfaces depending on the material. However, the numbers of virus will reduce considerably over that time as it dies off. Simple household disinfectants can kill it.

Controlling the Spread

Wherever you can you should be “social distancing”. The term social distancing does not just mean the 1.5m you should keep from other people. It is a guideline for slowing the spread of a virus by stopping person-person contact. Simple measures such as creating distance, regular hand washing, sanitising surfaces, and coughing/sneezing away from someone into your elbow all help to slow the spread. For more information on social distancing in different situations, visit the Department of Health website at www.health.gov.au. Search for “social distancing.”

Even with the virus outbreak, normal rules apply for all food business to not allow unwell staff handle food or contaminate food contact surfaces. Food businesses must send unwell staff home and staff must take it upon themselves not go to work if they think they have been exposed to COVID-19 or are feeling unwell.

Hygiene

Regular hand washing has always been one of the main ways to stop disease. You must wash your hands when:

- handing different foods;
- handling money;
- receiving deliveries;
- visiting the toilet; and/or
- entering and exiting the property etc.

The food business should think about creating better hand washing procedures to encourage staff to wash their hands more and place sanitiser dispensers at all customer service areas.

Staff Training

Food businesses should take the time to have all staff be re-trained or informed about the food hygiene rules. One great way to fight the spread of disease is to have a strong cleaning and sanitising process. Once a surfaces has been cleaned the commercial sanitiser chemical, if used properly, will kill bacteria and viruses making it safe.

The food business should take the time to ensure that the sanitiser used onsite is:

- the right type of chemical;
- still in date;
- diluted appropriately (in accordance with manufactures instructions); and
- applied to the food contact surfaces correctly.

For more information visit NSW Food Authority website at www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au and search for “chemical sanistiser in your food business.”

Preparing food at home

While people are in isolation no one should be cooking food for sale without approval from Council. Food delivery is still allowed in NSW, but this food should only come from Council’s approved food businesses.

Complaint Response

Any complaints Council receives about a food business will be investigated as normal.

Complaints about COVID-19 will be forwarded to NSW Health.

Questions about COVID-19 should be made to the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080.

COVID-19

Food Delivery

When delivering food, you must make sure that it is transported at the right temperature to keep it safe. Hot food should be kept above 60°C and cold food below 5°C.

If you are planning on doing a large number of deliveries that will take time please use thermal delivery containers to keep the food at safe temperatures.

- If food is to be transported for delivery it must be protected from contamination and kept under appropriate temperature control
- Always use food grade containers, including tubs, eskis or hot boxes to protect the food from contamination
- Keep hot food hot and cold food cold by using insulated bags or eskis
- Temperature control is not necessary if the food is made and delivered to the customer within 4 hours.

Signage

If your business is offering take away or delivered food, use signage to let the public know that these services are available.

Temporary, free-standing signs should not obstruct or cause harm to pedestrians and have to be weighed down to withstand wind.

