



County of Santa Cruz

Health Services Agency ♦ Environmental Health Division

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What to Do If We Suspect or Have Confirmed a Food Service Worker is COVID-19 Positive

Background

COVID-19 or “coronavirus” is a disease that causes respiratory illness and is spread through air via respiratory droplets from an infected person or by touching contaminated surfaces and subsequently touching mucous membranes.

As of 5:00 PM., May 3, 2020, at least 137 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Santa Cruz County and two deaths. At least 54, 923 cases and at least 2,215 deaths have been reported in California.



Contact the Environmental Health Division (at the number above) and close the facility immediately.

COVID-19 is Suspected

Send the person home immediately and request they be evaluated by a physician. Take note of individuals in close contact with the worker. Screen these individuals to determine if they have symptoms. Anyone reporting shortness of breath, coughing or two of the following symptoms must also be sent home and asked to speak to their physician: Fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and new loss of taste or smell.

There are HIPAA protections that restrict sharing of personal medical information. You cannot force someone to provide this information, but they are free to volunteer this for the safety of others. It would help to let them know that they are not in trouble for reporting this information.

If a person with constant contact with others in your business is COVID-19 positive, you will be contacted by the Santa Cruz county Communicable Disease Unit to discuss interactions within the business.

The Environmental Health Division may follow-up with you depending on the results of the investigation by the Communicable Disease Unit.

We understand that your food service is essential. Once you have excluded all individuals with symptoms, you can disinfect the facility as noted below and reopen of service. You must continuously monitor staff before and during food service. Pay special attention to those in close contact with the ill individuals. Be sure all staff are active in self-monitoring as well. Staff should be diligent about maintaining social distance and wear mouth coverings while at work.

More may be required based on initial testing results.

We are aware that some employees may be falsely claiming they have COVID-19. Take all reports seriously and conduct your due diligence by investigating the allegation and checking in with all other staff to ensure that people are healthy while at work.

COVID-19 Positive Individuals

These individuals must remain in isolation until the following is met:

1. The individual has not had a fever for **72 hours (3 days)** without use of fever-reducing medication;
2. Other symptoms have improved (cough, or shortness of breath); and
3. At least **10 days** have passed since symptoms first appeared

Individuals with Symptoms but No Testing

These individuals must remain in isolation until following is met:

1. The individual has not had a fever for **72 hours (3 days)** without use of fever-reducing medication;
2. Other symptoms have improved (cough, or shortness of breath); and
3. At least **10 days** have passed since symptoms first appeared



COVID-19 Positive with No Symptoms

These individuals must remain in isolation until the following is met:

1. At least **10 days** have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test and
2. They remain asymptomatic

Close contact with COVID-19 individuals, no confirmed COVID-19 and no symptoms

These individuals can continue with essential work provided they are screened daily, continue to have no symptoms, practice proper handwashing and sneeze/ sporadic cough etiquette, respect social distancing protocols and surfaces are disinfected frequently.

No close contact with the ill people and no symptoms

These individuals can continue to work provided they remain without symptoms and adhere to the facility's Social Distancing Protocols.

Effective April 25, 2020, all essential food workers and patrons visiting food service facilities must wear mouth coverings to prevent exposure from asymptomatic individuals.



Disinfecting

The facility must be thoroughly sanitized and disinfected before re-opening.

Disinfection

Disinfection is the act eliminating a specific agent from a surface- in this case COVID-19. Disinfection must occur using a chemical or method approved by the EPA to disable the COVID-19 virus. Chlorine (also known as bleach) can be used. Use 1/3 cup of bleach per gallon of water to disinfect surfaces and properly disable the virus. This is more than what is regularly required to sanitize food service equipment.

Alcohol of at least 60% Ethanol or 70% Isopropyl concentration can be used to wipe surfaces that cannot withstand chlorine and will not be in contact with food. Below are links to other disinfectants that are effective against COVID-19 (some may not be adequate for surfaces or utensils in contact with food, use chlorine or other approved sanitizers for these areas):

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

<https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>

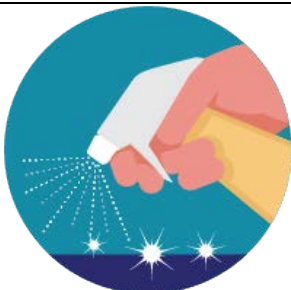
Use the disinfection process to address surfaces that may have been handled or contaminated by the ill person. Examples of some surfaces are:

- Entrance/ Exit door handles
- Employee lockers
- Time clocks
- Sink handles
- Refrigerator handles
- Food preparation equipment
- Food preparation tables and cutting boards
- Menus
- Cash registers and counters
- Grocery carts
- Restrooms

Staff must wear personal protective equipment like gloves, face shields, anti-slip shoes and aprons while conducting disinfection.

Visit the CDC web site for additional guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>.



Sanitizing

Sanitizing

Sanitizing is the typical process used to treat food utensils and equipment. Food service goods that are unlikely to be contaminated with COVID-19 can be sanitized as usual using an approved method. Wash utensils with soap and hot water, rinse them with clean water, and then immerse them in a solution of 100-200 PPM chlorine for 30 seconds, 200-400 PPM quaternary ammonium for one minute or other EPA approved sanitizer as directed by the manufacturer. Dishwashers must be set to dispense 50-200 PPM chlorine or heat the utensil to 160°F. Sanitizer or temperature verification must be provided and used to ensure proper sanitizing.

Prevention



Health and Training

It is critical that food service workers or volunteers be screened for symptoms of illness **prior** to being allowed to commence food service work. Staff must also be trained to identify conditions or illnesses that would exclude them from food service so that they know when to stay home. It is not a good idea to pressure individuals to come in to work when they are ill.

Individuals with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing must be excluded due to the risk of COVID-19. Individuals with symptoms of other illness like diarrhea, vomit, nausea, nose drip and any illnesses communicable by food must also be excluded as is currently required under California Retail Food Code regulations.

In addition to knowing when to stay home, staff must have working knowledge regarding processes needed keep food safe. Training must be provided based on their assigned duties before being allowed to work on their own.

All workers must wear a face cover while at work unless they have a doctor's note noting they cannot wear a face cover due to an underlying condition.



Handwashing and Food Handling

In addition to illness exclusion, handwashing is key to preventing the spread of most illnesses. Adequate handwashing supplies must always be present, functional and equipped during service. A person must be in charge of ensuring these remain usable and stocked while preparing food and conducting clean-up activities.

We recommend use of alcohol-based (at least 60% Ethanol or 70% Isopropyl) hand sanitizer after handwashing. **Hand sanitizer shall not be used in lieu of handwashing.**

Gloves must be changed at a frequency required for handwashing. Staff shall wash their hands before putting on and upon changing gloves.

Food service staff shall wash their hands under, but not limited to, the following conditions:

- When entering the kitchen and before starting food preparation
- After touching the face, hair, and other areas of the body
- After using the restroom
- Between handling raw meat and ready to eat foods
- After sneezing, coughing, or using a tissue
- After smoking, eating, drinking and using a phone
- After cleaning tables, bussing, handling dirty dishes, and touching items in contact with patrons
- When hands become soiled

Provide a garbage can near the restroom exit door so that staff can dispose of paper towels used to open the door.



Measures must be taken to prevent contamination of food by:

- Washing hands between changes in activity including handling money
- Minimizing bare hand contact with ready to eat food
- Removing any non-essential individuals in the food service area
- Preventing non-service animals from entering the facility
- Avoiding using cups or containers provided by the public for now
- Sneezing away from food and into an area that will prevent spreading of aerosol droplets like an elbow

Proper sneezing procedure can help protect others from colds, flu and COVID-19.

Additional Information

Up to date legal orders, information, status reports, and web site links are available in the Santa Cruz County Public Health Communicable Disease Control web site at: www.santacruzhealth.org/coronavirus

Any questions regarding food safety can be directed to the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division for triage at: www.scceh.org