



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.

- Check with your local health department for any additional requirements in your jurisdiction, especially if modifying operations (such as adding outdoor dining). Check with the [MDH Office of Food Protection](#) for FAQs on food facilities.



OPEN FOR MASKS ON MARYLAND

- Face coverings are required for all employees in both indoor and outdoor areas of foodservice establishments. For exceptions to this requirement, please see the latest [Executive Order](#).
- Face coverings are required for all guests, including children older than five years of age, when indoors. Face masks are also required at outdoor venues (Please refer to section II.m of the latest [Executive Order](#) for the definition of an outdoor venue), but not required otherwise when outdoors. For exceptions to this requirement, please see the latest [Executive Order](#). MDH and the CDC continue to recommend that face coverings be worn in crowded settings and venues, even if fully vaccinated (two weeks after receiving the second dose in a two-dose series, or two weeks after a single-dose vaccine). Individuals who are not fully vaccinated are strongly encouraged to [get vaccinated](#) and continue wearing a face covering outdoors whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Customers with disabilities who are unable to wear a face covering must be provided with an opportunity to receive the same goods and services

as customers without disabilities. For more information, please see the [Face Coverings FAQ](#).

- Removal of masks is appropriate when customers are consuming food and beverage.
- Cloth face coverings are recommended by both the CDC and the Maryland Department of Health to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Face shields are acceptable face coverings. However, MDH strongly recommends, but does not require, also wearing a cloth face covering if using a face shield.



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.
- Encourage employees to maintain social distancing, including during breaks, and modify procedures to avoid staff congregation.
- 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.



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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. Please note this is recommended but not required for outdoor dining facilities.
- 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, adjacent seating is allowable as long as a physical barrier (including, but not limited to a plexiglass shield) separate the adjacent booths from each other and prevent persons in adjacent booths from any physical contact while either seated or standing (i.e., a height of at least 6 feet from the floor to the top of the barrier). Please note this is recommended but not required for outdoor dining facilities.
- Designate and signpost the direction of foot traffic in main circulation paths. Consider one-way circulation routes.
- 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.
- For indoor dining - 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 is not permitted. This is not required for outdoor dining.
- 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 papers.
- 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. If cold or inclement weather is expected, plan for groups that may wish to move indoors so as to not exceed indoor capacity limits.

- 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.
- Indoor dining may not have more than 10 people seated at a table.



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.
- Clean soft goods (such as napkins and tablecloths) after each use by removing them from the table in a tote and launder in the warmest appropriate water.
- The use of buffets or similar serving format is permitted with precautions.
- 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.
- Provide disposable hand towels and trash bins in restrooms, so that customers can exit the restrooms without touching doors handles with clean bare hands.



OPEN FOR COMMUNICATIONS

- 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.
- Contact your local health department if you are concerned about transmission of COVID-19 in your facility.

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](https://www.governor.maryland.gov/covid-19-pandemic-orders-and-guidance).