



CDC Foundation
Together our impact is greater

COVID-19 Health Equity Toolkit for Food Industry Workers

Background.

COVID-19 revealed incontrovertible truths about our food system. As many U.S. workers are slowly returning to the office in recent months, [31 million essential frontline workers](#), including those in neighborhood grocery stores, meatpackers, farmworkers, and servers never stopped working. While they served diners, prepared food, harvested crops, and operated factories, they were at greater risk for COVID-19 exposure, pushing through exhaustion and stress to keep the world fed.



Black, Hispanic/Latino, and non-U.S. born individuals from Asian/Pacific Islander (API) communities comprise a disproportionate 49% of food industry workers – an occupation with higher risk of COVID-19 exposure – and bear the heaviest burden of COVID-19 infection, limited testing access, illness, and death rates. If they are unfortunate enough to get sick, they are less likely to have access to quality care. As a result, Black individuals are two times more likely to die from COVID-19 relative to other groups, Hispanic/Latino individuals contract and die from COVID-19 at disproportionate rates in 42 states, and Asian/Pacific Islanders have hospitalization rates that are 1.3x higher than other groups.

Businesses were also not immune to the pandemic. Many have hung on; others are closed permanently costing workers their jobs and owners their livelihoods. Today, food related businesses struggle to recover the employees who left to care for family or moved on to better paying jobs with benefits and greater stability. When we can implement thoughtful health and wellness strategies in our workplaces, we can empower team members to continue or return to work with pride and confidence.

This stark data underscored the need for the CDC Foundation (CDCF) to discover insights to understand the attitudes and awareness of vaccinations, PPE access, proper ventilation and environmental challenges of Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian Pacific Islander essential food workers and use these insights to develop and update a COVID-19 Health Equity Toolkit that provides culturally relevant, public health guidance tailored to effectively meet the unique needs of these food workers navigating COVID-19.

Purpose

Now that COVID-19 vaccines are available to adults and children living in the United States, **we need your help with sharing this health toolkit** that encourages a full cycle of vaccinations and boosting, proper masking, ventilation, and community COVID-19 case monitoring, especially as new variants emerge. The ultimate goal of this toolkit is to reach all food service workers with the products provided and raise awareness to help individuals better protect themselves and feel confident they are working safely.

The CDCF has created several promotional materials, including digital and physical infographics, and handouts to promote this critical COVID-19 related safety information and encourage individuals to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their communities from the virus. These materials can be printed and displayed in employee break rooms and used during team meetings. We also recommend utilizing the accompanying social media toolkit to inform customers of steps you are taking to keep your teams healthy and safe.

Vaccine Guidance Infographic 1



Save lives. Get vaccinated today.

Protect yourself with a COVID-19 vaccination.



Get a COVID-19 vaccine today!

The pandemic has affected everyone, but essential workers are at the highest risk level—as they could be easily exposed to COVID-19 every day at work. COVID-19 vaccinations are one way to help people be safe again.

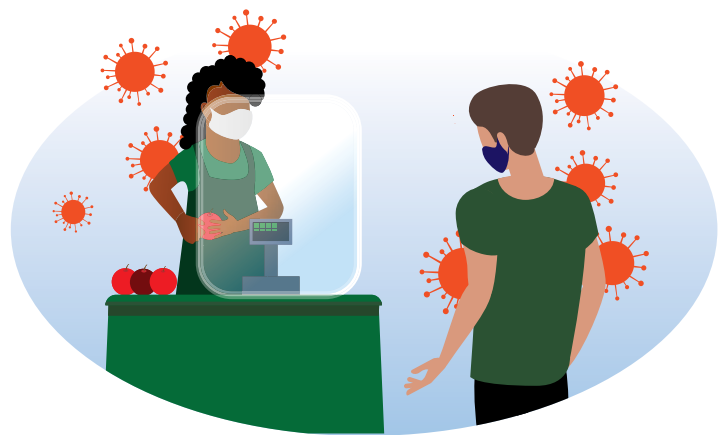


COVID-19 vaccines are free for all people living in the United States, regardless of a person's immigration status, and including those who do not have health insurance.



Protect your loved ones and communities.

Vaccines can help us get back to the moments we miss most, like hugging a grandparent or attending a sporting event. The sooner more people receive a COVID-19 vaccine, the sooner we can keep our loved ones and those who are most likely to get sick in our communities safe.



COVID-19 is affecting everyone, but research shows that Black/African Americans, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian American and other Pacific Islander individuals have been affected the most by the virus.



Feel confident and safe when you make the choice to get vaccinated.

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is one of the best ways to keep you and your family safe. People who have been fully vaccinated can begin to do activities that they had stopped doing because of the pandemic.

Also, fully vaccinated people with a breakthrough infection are less likely to develop serious illness.

The COVID-19 vaccines have been received by millions of people in the United States since they were authorized for emergency use by the FDA. The sooner you get vaccinated, the sooner you are protected!

(Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.)

Protect yourself by getting a COVID-19 vaccine today!

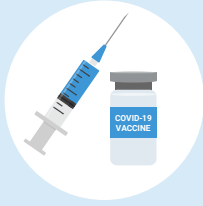


Vaccine Guidance Infographic 2



COVID-19 vaccines are free!

Create a vaccination plan today.



COVID-19 vaccines are free for all people living in the United States, regardless of a person's immigration status, and including those who do not have health insurance.



Many states now offer COVID-19 vaccines in many locations, making it easier for more people to get vaccinated. Registration for a vaccine may vary based on your city or state.



The sooner you get a vaccine, the sooner you can protect yourself and your loved ones. Take action by finding a vaccine location near you and scheduling an appointment today!

After you schedule your vaccination appointment, make an action plan for you and/or your family!

MY VACCINE ACTION PLAN

My first vaccine date is:

Date:

Time:

My second vaccine date is:

Date:

Time:

If applicable

My first booster date is:

Date:

Time:

My second booster date is:

Date:

Time:

My third booster date is:

Date:

Time:

I will get to my vaccine appointment by:

Travel Plan

I am getting vaccinated because:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Easily find your COVID-19 vaccines at [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov).

Mobile Site

If it is difficult for you to travel, mobile sites offer vaccines closer to where people work and live.

Pharmacy

You may prefer to get a vaccine at a local pharmacy or drug store that is close to you. Call your pharmacy to see if they currently have COVID-19 vaccines.

Doctor's Office

You may choose to get a vaccine from your doctor. If you do not have access to a doctor, check to see if there are other locations in your community with COVID-19 vaccines.

Hospital

You may choose to get a vaccine at the hospital that is close to you. If you do not have a hospital near you, call your local public health department to learn more.

(Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.)

Urgent Care

Many urgent care locations are now offering vaccines in local communities. If you have an urgent care near you, check to see if they have COVID-19 vaccines.

Community Health Center

Community health centers are a great option to get a vaccine. Call your local public health department to learn more.

Local Public Health Department

Local public health departments are currently offering vaccines in communities. Call your local public health department to learn more.



Keep Food Businesses Safe Infographic



COVID-19 safety tips for food business managers



1. When to encourage workers and customers to wear a mask.

If there is a local mandate, all workers should be required to wear masks.

- If there is not a local mandate, a restaurant can still decide to require all its workers to wear masks. Train all employees to use the script on page 4 with customers.
- If there is not a local mandate and the restaurant decides not to require all its workers to wear masks, individual workers should decide whether they want to wear a mask. If they do choose to wear a mask, they should be supported in that decision. Please provide the script on page 5.
- When case numbers increase in your community and it is appropriate for your business, consider printing and posting the [Covid Pledge](#) and [Diner Code of Conduct](#).
- Emphasize that, if masks are required, an employee's role is to request or encourage compliance. Make it clear that employees are not expected to enforce mask-wearing requirements.
- If masks are required either by local mandate or by the restaurant:
 - Place a trained employee at the door to ask customers to wear a mask upon entry.
 - Create a support plan that prepares managers to step in and help in situations where customers refuse to wear a mask or respond aggressively.



2. Encourage workers to get vaccinated and stay current with boosters.

A vaccinated workforce will minimize costly staffing disruptions.

- To introduce workers to the key facts about COVID-19 vaccines, direct them to the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- Tell workers that the vaccine is free of charge to all people living in the United States, regardless of their immigration or health insurance status; receiving this public service will not hurt or affect eligibility for US citizenship.
- Consider offering workers two to four hours of paid time off to get the vaccine. This approach is more affordable than paying for sick leave or losing an employee for 10 to 14 days due to COVID-19—related illness. It will also allow you to have a healthy team and build morale.
- Share www.vaccinations.gov or address and contact of nearby vaccination locations.

Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.



COVID-19 safety tips for food business managers



3. Properly ventilate your workspace and business.

Proper ventilation reduces COVID-19 and other airborne pathogens in the air, including cold and flu, helping workers stay healthy.

- Supply as much fresh or filtered air as possible.
- Exhaust air to the outside or clean with HVAC filters.
- Control airflow to move air up and away from people.
- Use portable air devices with HEPA filters or upper room ultraviolet germicidal irradiation units to supplement ventilation, if necessary or desired.
- Download and review the [Safety First Ventilation infographic](#).

4. Monitor COVID-19 in your community.

You can review **COVID-19 Community Levels by County**, which is also handy if you plan to travel: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

A quick glance at the map will show green, yellow, or orange areas, depending on the total number of cases, percent of cases compared to the population, and increase or decrease in the number of cases.

5. If COVID-19 is at a high level in your community, encourage social distancing in noncustomer-facing spaces if possible.

Keeping your staff healthy starts with the spaces where your staff work or socialize together, such as kitchens, break rooms, and warehouses.

- Modify or adjust furniture and workstations to maintain social distancing if the workplace allows.
- Place tape on the floors to ensure individuals assigned to kitchen workstations can socially distance to the extent possible.
- Reduce the number of employees in kitchens, break rooms, warehouses, etc., by extending and staggering shifts, start times, and break times as feasible.
- When there is a lot of transmission occurring in the community, close break rooms and locker rooms. If it's not possible, stagger use, require mask wearing, and enable social distancing.

Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.



COVID-19 safety tips for food business managers

5. Encourage employees to follow cleaning protocols.

Follow CDC-recommended cleaning and sanitation protocols to protect against COVID-19 and make customers and employees feel safe.



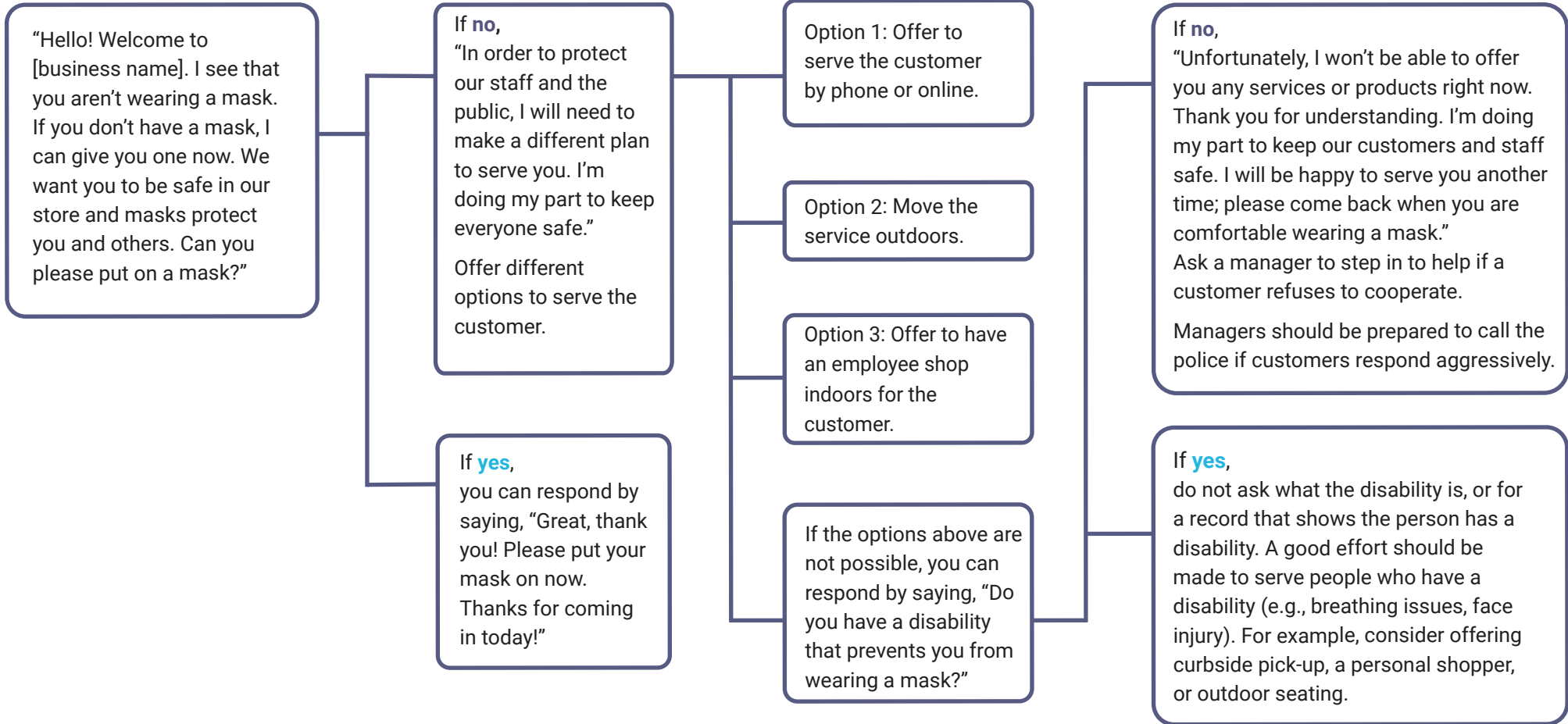
- COVID-19 is an illness that spreads mainly through the air by inhalation of virus-containing particles or droplets. If community risk is high, masking, ventilation, and physical distancing are the most important methods for reducing spread.
- In some cases, it may be spread through contact with contaminated surfaces; therefore, it is recommended to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Cleaning removes dirt from surfaces to allow for more effective disinfection. Disinfection uses chemicals to kill COVID-19 germs and works better on an already cleaned surface.
- Follow current CDC COVID-19 guidelines on cleaning and disinfecting routines (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>).
- Create a cleaning routine and train employees to complete it every day.
- Encourage employees to wash their hands regularly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.



Sample script for employees to ask customers to wear a mask

START



Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.



Sample script for employees who decide to wear a mask



"You don't have to wear a mask around me."

"Go ahead and take off your mask."

"We don't have to wear those things anymore!"

Start

"Thanks, but..."



"I feel more comfortable wearing my mask right now. When cases go down, I'll reconsider."

"I'm taking extra precautions."

"I'm doing this for my family. Don't anyone to get sick."

If they persist, consider the following options:

"Excuse me but I have to get back to work."

"This is my personal decision and I hope you will respect it."

"I've made this decision with my family."

If they start to tease or harass you, remove yourself from the situation and report the incident to a supervisor.

Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.

COVID-19 Safety Assessment

ARE YOU PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM COVID-19?

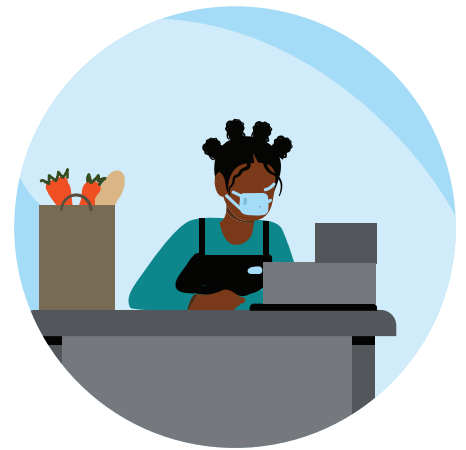
TAKE THE QUIZ

HOW ARE YOU KEEPING YOURSELF SAFE FROM COVID-19?

Mark the actions you take daily to protect your health, your home, and your community.

Actions You Take to Protect Your Personal Health

- I have a plan to get vaccinated.
- When appropriate, I wear a mask that covers both my nose and mouth.
- I stay at least six feet away from other people at work and in public places when appropriate.
- I stay at home and away from others if I am feeling symptoms such as fever, headache, cough or loss of taste or smell.
- I use my elbow or arm to cover coughs and sneezes.



Actions You Take to Protect Your Home and Community

- I help think about how to isolate people in the house who have COVID-19 symptoms.
- When there is high community risk, I don't go to social activities where people are not wearing masks and I encourage others to do the same.
- I keep masks and Covid-19 testing kits on hand.

SCORING

You're finished! Count how many checkmarks are on your list.

If you have 6–8 checks: You are a COVID-19 safety champion! Read the COVID-19 safety tips below for more information.

If you have 3–6 checks: You are on the way to becoming a COVID-19 safety champion! Read the COVID-19 safety tips below to learn how to earn more checks.

If you have 0–2 checks: Read the COVID-19 safety tips below to improve your score. These tips will help keep you and those around you safe!

COVID-19 SAFETY TIPS

Missing a check? Follow these steps and take action to protect your health at home and in your community.

Vaccines:

Vaccines may be available at pharmacies, community centers, or community vaccination sites.

Coughing and sneezing:

Cough or sneeze into your elbow, arm, or in a tissue, then wash your hands.

Wear your mask correctly:

Put your mask on over your nose and mouth. Learn about the types of masks available at www.covid.gov.

Keep masks and Covid-19 testing kits on hand:

You can find resources and information at www.covid.gov. Keep extra masks in your car, purse, or backpack.

Social distancing:

Stay at least six feet away from people who don't live with you.

Living with high-risk people:

If your home includes someone with a health issue or elderly family, all household members should practice COVID-19 safety practices.

To monitor your health:

Be alert for symptoms like fever, headache, and loss of taste or smell. If you think you may be sick, use the [CDC COVID-19 Self Checker](https://www.cdc.gov/ncov/2019-ncov/index.html).

When someone is sick with COVID-19 in your home:

If possible, have the person use a separate bedroom and bathroom. If you share a space, open windows to allow more air to flow.

Proper handwashing:

Wet your hands, add soap, lather your hands, scrub for at least 20 seconds, then rinse and dry.

When thinking about social activities:

Consider how many people will be there, if they will wear masks, and if you can social distance.

Note: If you are up to date on your COVID-19 vaccinations, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings. Check your local COVID-19 Community Level for recommendations on when to wear a mask indoors and additional precautions you can take to protect yourself from COVID-19.

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> to view the most up-to-date CDC guidance around COVID-19 vaccines (e.g., booster shots, vaccine schedules).

Content updated as of CDC Guidance in September 2022.

How to Speak Up and Stay Safe Infographic

Are you concerned about getting COVID-19 while at work?

Do you think your workplace leaders could do more to protect you at work?

Do you want to report a safety concern but are afraid it may put your job at risk?



HOW YOU CAN USE YOUR VOICE:

1

You have the right to a safe workplace.

- The Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA)* provides you with the right to file a complaint if your workplace is not safe. Remember, you have the right to a safe and healthy workplace.
- Filing a complaint is brave. Your complaint will be taken seriously.

**OSHA is a government agency that sets and carries out the rules for safety in the workplace.*

2

You can file a complaint by calling the OSHA Complaint Desk.

- Call 800 321 6742 to report that you don't feel safe at work.
- You can file your complaint without saying your name, so you can feel safe using your voice.

3

OSHA reviews each complaint.

- OSHA will review your complaint and decide the next steps.
- Next steps might include an off-site investigation or an on-site inspection of your workplace.
- You can give your name, but you do not have to. You can file a complaint without anyone knowing you filed it.

OSHA call centers are not open 24 hours a day. Calling during regular business hours is recommended. If that isn't possible, you can leave a message for an OSHA representative to call back. Representatives can help you in Spanish and English. (Tip: If you are not comfortable speaking in English or Spanish, have a family member or friend help you complete the call.)

Mental Health Matters Infographic

Many essential workers at grocery stores, restaurants, and convenience stores have to work with customers while feeling stress and anxiety during these challenging times. If you are feeling stressed or anxious, it's important to learn how to care for your mental health.



1 Check for these symptoms

- Extra worrying, fear, or stress
- Feeling sad or low
- Confused thinking or problems focusing
- Changes in sleeping habits or feeling tired
- Changes in eating habits, such as increased hunger or lack of appetite
- Overuse of substances like alcohol or drugs
- Headaches, stomachaches, joint aches
- Difficulty completing daily activities and handling daily problems

2 Fighting fear with fact

FEAR: If I have a mental health issue, it's because I have poor health or because I am weak.

FACT: It's normal to need mental health support. One in four adults have a mental health illness; racism and stress often make mental health issues worse.

FEAR: I will be judged for my mental health issue.

FACT: Taking care of mental health is just as important as taking care of physical health. We brush our teeth; mental health care is like "brushing our brains."

FEAR: I delay getting care for myself because I need to take care of others.

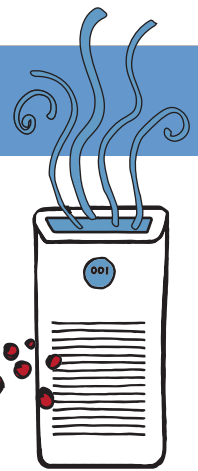
FACT: It takes an average of 11 years for people to get the mental health care they need. Getting help sooner allows you to take better care of both yourself and others.

3 Get the support you need

Pandemics are stressful times; it's common to feel worried, afraid, sad, or angry. Get the help you need. Visit the How Right Now website ([howrightnow.org](https://www.howrightnow.org)) to find ways to deal with COVID-19–related stress.

Safety First Infographics

Safety First: Ventilation Basics



VENTILATION BASICS

Supply as much fresh or filtered air as possible; exhaust air to the outside or clean it with high-efficiency filters; control airflow to move air up and away from people: these are three ways ventilation can reduce risk for spread of airborne contagion.

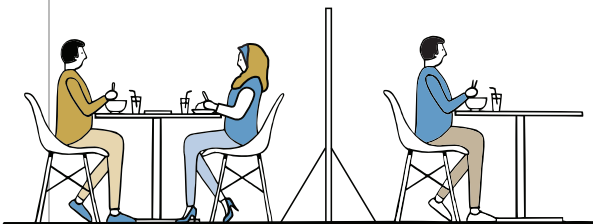
Keep windows open whenever workers and diners are present if this can be done safely. Be sure all **HVAC systems** are **fully operational, performing as designed, and recently serviced and cleaned**. Clean filters if they are a cleanable type, and be sure they are properly fitted and sealed to prevent air from bypassing them. **Optimize the number of air changes per hour** your system is providing; a rate of four to six air changes per hour has been suggested as a reasonable target to reduce risk for spread of airborne infection in restaurants. **Increase the percentage of fresh air your system** supplies to the maximum feasible. **Upgrade to the highest MERV grade filters** your system can handle, preferably at least MERV-13. Consult a qualified, trusted HVAC engineer or contractor to determine air changes and the highest MERV grade filter your system will support.

Portable air purifying units can be used to supplement existing HVAC systems and to compensate for the lack of an HVAC system in situations where one cannot be installed. Look for units that provide **at least four to six air changes per hour** and **discharge air upward** vertically, rather than horizontally. There is **no need to buy costly add-ons** like ultraviolet filter cleaners, titanium di-oxide, ionization, or carbon filters. **What matters most is high-efficiency HEPA filters**. If units are too noisy, you can run them at a lower speed to reduce noise. But be aware that their ratings are based on operation at full speed: anything lower will decrease the number of air changes and therefore their effectiveness.

How many portable air purifying units will you need? As a rough rule of thumb, assuming a 10-foot ceiling, allow one unit operating at 100 cubic feet per minute per table, or one unit operating at 200 cubic feet per minute between every two tables. Set units on the floor venting upward. In practice, the correct number of units should be based on careful calculations: a link to an easy-to-use calculator can be found [here](#). Calculations must be based on the airflow produced at the fan speed you will use day to day, not the maximum airflow the unit can produce at the highest fan speed.

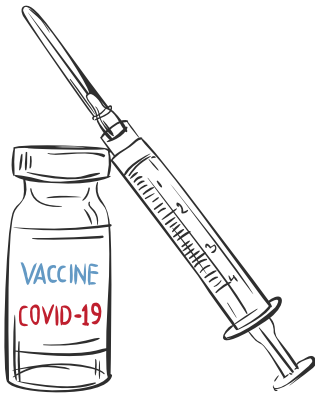
Properly designed and installed **upper-room ultraviolet germicidal irradiation** may also be considered in situations where an existing ventilation system is inadequate and cannot easily or affordably be upgraded, or where there is no existing ventilation system.

Portable, movable Plexiglass or polycarbonate cough and sneeze barriers can be used to block horizontal airflow between tables and divert airflow upward. Their lower edge should be below table or waist level—about 18 inches above the floor—and their upper edge should be at least 5 feet above the floor. Install as many barriers as possible between tables. It is especially important to **interrupt airflow that is moving horizontally** toward a wall-mounted return air grille. This will reduce the likelihood that airborne contaminants will be carried from one table to another. A qualified and trusted HVAC engineer, architect, or environmental engineer can help you place barriers to be sure you don't inadvertently worsen the problem.



Diner Code of Conduct

We're creating the safest dining experience we can.
And we need your help, too!



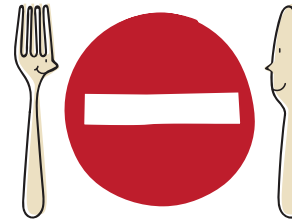
Be Vaccinated

When arriving at the restaurant, **I'll provide evidence of being vaccinated against Covid-19 or medically exempt from vaccination.** I understand the importance of being vaccinated to protect myself and the people around me.



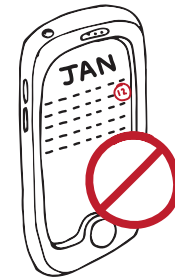
Wear a Mask

When at the restaurant, **I'll wear my mask at all times**, unless the community has a documented COVID-19 vaccination rate of at least 85%. This includes when I'm in any shared indoor space, seated at an indoor table and not actively eating or drinking, and when I interact with workers. I'll be just as careful even if I've been vaccinated.



Be Kind

Mutual kindness is paramount to good hospitality. I will show respect and appreciation for all those working to serve me, and for fellow diners. I also understand that management reserves the right to decline serving to anyone not providing evidence of being vaccinated against Covid-19 or medically exempt from vaccination, or not wearing a mask.



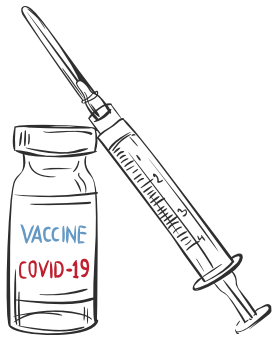
Be Responsible

I'll reschedule my visit if I currently have COVID-19, if I've had a fever or any symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 10 days, or if I've been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the past two weeks. You'll make it easy and cost-free for me to rebook.

Our Covid Pledge

What we do to protect our diners and workers from Covid-19

We will: Make sure all restaurant workers **wear masks at all times**, and all guests wear masks at all times when not eating, especially when interacting with workers



We will: **Ensure that all restaurant workers have been vaccinated**—unless they are medically exempt—to protect themselves, their families, their co-workers, and diners, and wear masks according to local guidelines.



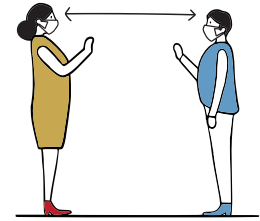
Make sure **ventilation systems** are functioning properly, clean, and operating whenever workers or diners are on the premises; and increase air filtration and fresh air circulation to the maximum possible extent



Screen all restaurant workers for symptoms every day; help workers find nearby testing sites and encourage them to get tested frequently; screen arriving diners and help them make a future reservation if they have had Covid symptoms in the previous 10 days or been exposed to anyone with Covid in the previous two weeks.



Make sure all restaurant workers **wash or sanitize their hands** often, and routinely clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces and objects.



Make sure all restaurant workers maintain safe distance from other people—ideally **at least 6 feet** and all diners maintain safe distance from people outside their party.