

# COVID-19 Food Establishment FAQ

*This Checklist can be used to help Food Establishments manage COVID issues.*

1. **What should I be doing in my restaurant to keep staff and patrons safe?**
  - a. **Follow these sector specific guidelines.** <https://www.mass.gov/doc/sector-specific-workplace-safety-standards-phase-ii-for-restaurants-to-address-covid-19/download>
2. **If a recent customer calls and reports they tested positive, what do I have to do?**
  - a. Until the Board of Health or Public Health Nurse call, you don't have to do anything, but it would be a best practice alert your staff and do a thorough, extra cleaning of all surfaces in your restaurant.
  - b. It would also be a best practice to alert your patrons and remind your staff to be vigilant and follow all the rules around wearing masks, social distancing, washing hands, staying home when ill, and reporting any COVID infections in their household.
  - c. If the Board of Health calls, you are required to cooperate with contact tracing.
3. **What do I do if an onsite staff person reports he/she has tested positive for COVID-19?**
  - a. Tell the staff person to immediately isolate at home and away from family and friends until released by public health officials. Isolation currently ends a minimum of 10 days after they first have symptoms (or after a positive test if they are asymptomatic) and after 24 hours without fever and with improving symptoms. They should follow the Public Health Nurse instructions.
  - b. Close and clean as soon as possible then you may reopen unless told otherwise by BOH.
  - c. **Notify the Board of Health of the positive report.**
  - d. Notify your staff of the potential exposure if they were within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes.
  - e. Before the Public Health Nurse calls to do contact tracing, staff who have had close contact with a positive case should consider staying home. Testing less than 4 days after the exposure is not conclusive. If you do an immediate test and the **test is negative, test again 4 days after the exposure.** Consider asking all staff who are a close contact to the positive case to get tested 4 days after the exposure and stay home until the test results are in to stop the spread.
  - f. Consider notifying recent patrons of the potential exposure.
  - g. When the Board of Health calls, cooperate with contact tracing.
4. **What do I do if an onsite staff person reports a positive COVID case in their household?**
  - a. It is advised to report the close contact exposure to the case to the Board of Health.
  - b. Ill or exposed close contacts must stay at home and follow Board of Health instructions.
  - c. In general, someone who is a close contact of a positive case must quarantine at home for 14 days after their most recent exposure. You can't test out of quarantine. If someone in their household is sick and they continue to have regular contact with the case, their 14 days quarantine does not begin until after the person with COVID has been released from isolation. To shorten rolling quarantine periods in a household, consider isolating or quarantining in a remote location such as a hotel room or a separate house.
  - d. Encourage your exposed or ill staff to also protect their families and friends by notifying them of their status, wearing a mask even at home and staying isolated or quarantined for the required period.
  - e. If the Board of Health asks for contact information for staff and patrons, you must provide it.
5. **Do food items handled by a COVID positive staff person need to be discarded?** COVID is not a foodborne illness if you follow good hygiene practices. Ready-to-Eat foods should be discarded. Foods that can be cooked can be safely served.
6. **What is a Close Contact?** Defined as someone who was within 6 feet for 15 minutes over the course of 24 hours within 48 hours of symptom onset or the 10-day recovery period of a person who tested positive.
7. **If I am a close contact to a positive case, can I return to work if I get a negative COVID test?** A negative COVID test **does not** shorten the mandatory 14-day quarantine period since a person may test positive even on the last day of their quarantine period.

- a. Under the Federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act, certain employers are required to give paid time off for COVID isolation or quarantine. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/pandemic/ffcra-employee-paid-leave>
  - b. Even if not required, it is a best practice to support your staff in staying home when ill or exposed to this virus by giving them paid time off. Don't let them return to work before they are allowed to do so.
- 8. When the health department leaves you a message to deep clean, what does that mean?**
- a. Wear gloves and a mask and follow the product ventilation instructions when cleaning and disinfecting.
  - b. In addition to the usual daily cleaning, do an extra-long cleaning using EPA approved chemicals on all non-food contact surfaces that are touched by staff and patrons including walls, floors, tables, chairs, doorhandles, toilets, faucets, light switches, etc. <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19>
  - c. As with any deep cleaning, close until you are done to keep patrons safe and to comply with DPH and CDC guidance. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>
- 9. What do I do if I am ordered to stay home and need to go into work to check on something?** You cannot break isolation or quarantine for any reason except to seek urgent medical attention. You must find someone else to take on any essential in-person functions. Fines of over \$1,000 per violation and legal actions can be levied for breaking Board of Health orders including suspending your food permit.
- 10. What are the rules if a staff person travels out of state?** Except for travel to certain low risk states, anyone returning from out-of-state travel that is not an excepted reason, must complete a travel form and quarantine for 14 days or obtain a negative PCR test. Best is to wait 4 days to take the test, but the rules say it can be within 72 hours of your return. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order#massachusetts-travel-form->