



What To Do If a Restaurant Employee Gets COVID-19

Last Updated: 12/3/20

Even when a business follows all of the COVID-19 protocols, it is very likely that someone who comes into that business will later be diagnosed with COVID-19 because of community spread. Restaurants are no exception, which is why restaurants continue to follow strict sanitation, social distancing, and health screening protocols.

The Texas Restaurant Association recommends that all restaurants follow these CDC and state guidelines when they learn an employee has contracted COVID-19.

1. Ensure any employee with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 does not return to work until the State's quarantine protocols have been met:
 - a. In the case of an employee or contractor who was diagnosed with COVID-19, the individual may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met: at least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications); and the individual has improvement in symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); and at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
 - b. In the case of an employee or contractor who has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and does not get evaluated by a medical professional or tested for COVID-19, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19, and the individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above.
 - c. Alternatively, if the employee or contractor has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual for return based on an alternative diagnosis.
2. If the COVID-19 case has not already been reported by the sick employee or the medical facility that ran the test, then report it to the local public health department.
3. Identify anyone who had close contact with the sick employee at the restaurant (i.e., within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes), and notify them that they may have been exposed without revealing the name or identifying information of the sick employee. Keep the identifying information confidential per ADA and EEOC guidance. Any employees with signs or symptoms must quarantine as provided above. Employees who may have been exposed but are showing no signs or symptoms may continue working if the restaurant follows the enclosed CDC guidance.
4. Thoroughly clean and disinfect the facility. The CDC specifically says that, in most cases, businesses do not need to shut down because an employee contracts COVID-19. Instead, if it has been less than 7 days since the sick employee was in the facility, the CDC directs businesses to close off areas used for prolonged periods by the sick employee and increase air circulation to those areas (for example by opening outside doors and windows and bringing in fans). The CDC further recommends that a business wait 24 hours, or as long as possible, and then clean and disinfect the sick employee's work area and all frequently touched surfaces. If possible, TRA recommends completing this step while the restaurant is closed at night to ensure a thorough cleaning and disinfecting. If it has been 7 days or more since the sick employee was in the facility, then the CDC only recommends routine cleaning and disinfecting. See the enclosed cleaning and disinfecting guidance from the CDC and the EPA.

Critical Infrastructure Workers Exposed to Individuals with COVID-19

Current CDC guidance recommends that, with possible exception noted below, individuals (including critical infrastructure workers) exposed to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be quarantined for 14 days, consistent with [Public Health Guidance for Community-Related Exposure](#).

Critical infrastructure workers who are symptomatic

Critical infrastructure workers who develop a temperature equal to or higher than 100.4 °F¹ or [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) should immediately [separate themselves from others](#), inform their established point of contact at their workplace (e.g., supervisor or occupational health program), and arrange for medical evaluation and testing.

Critical infrastructure workers who are not symptomatic

Employers may consider allowing exposed and asymptomatic critical infrastructure workers to continue to work in select instances when it is necessary to preserve the function of critical infrastructure workplaces. **This option should be used as a last resort and only in limited circumstances, such as when cessation of operation of a facility may cause serious harm or danger to public health or safety.** In such instances:

Employers are encouraged to work with state, tribal, local, and territorial public health officials in managing the continuation of work in a way that best protects the health of their workers and the general public.

Critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following exposure to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 provided they remain asymptomatic and have not tested positive. Additionally, the following risk mitigation precautions should be implemented prior to and during the work shift:

Pre-Screen: Encourage employees planning to enter the workplace to self-screen at home prior to coming onsite. Employees should not attempt to enter the workplace if any of the following are present: [symptoms](#) of COVID-19; temperature equal to or higher than 100.4 °F¹; or are waiting for the results of a viral test.

Screen at the workplace: Employers should conduct an on-site symptom assessment, including temperature screening, prior to each work shift. Ideally, screening should happen before the individual enters the facility.

Regularly monitor: As long as the employee doesn't have a fever or symptoms, they should self-monitor under the supervision of their employer's occupational health program or their workplace COVID-19 coordinator or team.

Wear a cloth mask: Ensure all employees wear a cloth [mask](#) in accordance with CDC and OSHA guidance and any state or local requirements.

Social Distance: Employee should stay at least 6 feet apart from others and practice [social distancing](#) as work duties permit in the workplace.

Clean and disinfect workspaces: [Clean and disinfect](#) all areas such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared equipment routinely.

CDC & EPA Recommendations – Cleaning and Disinfecting to Address COVID-19

General Guidance

- Ensure cleaning and disinfection products are not past their expiration date.
- Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for application, proper ventilation, and safety measures. Many products require keeping the surface wet for several minutes to ensure germs are killed.
- Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser.
- Wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash. Remove gloves and gowns carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
- Always wash your hands immediately after removing gloves. Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds.

Hard (Non-porous) Surfaces

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, use an EPA-approved product for use against COVID-19¹ or a diluted household bleach solution if appropriate for the surface (5 tablespoons of bleach per gallon of room temperature water OR 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of room temperature water).

Soft (Porous) Surfaces

- Remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces.
- After cleaning:
 - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.
 - Otherwise, use an EPA-approved product for use against COVID-19 that is suitable for porous surfaces.

Electronics

- Remove visible contamination if present. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- Consider use of wipeable covers for electronics.
- If no manufacturer guidance is available, consider the use of alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70% alcohol to disinfect touch screens. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids.

Linens, Clothing, and Other Items That Go in the Laundry

- To minimize the possibility of dispersing the virus through the air, do not shake dirty laundry.
- Wash items in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people’s items.
- Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces.

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19>