

# **VDH Interim Guidance: Information for Food Establishments Regarding COVID-19**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed interim guidance for assessing the exposure risk and managing healthcare personnel (HCP) with potential exposure in a healthcare setting to patients with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The purpose of this document from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is to summarize key CDC recommendations and provide VDH-specific recommendations or details.

## **Key Concepts and Recommendations for Food Establishments**

1. There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spread through food or food shipped from affected regions. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there is likely very low risk of spread from food products or packaging that are shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient, refrigerated, or frozen temperatures. Even in areas experiencing outbreaks, meat is safe to eat when safely handled during preparation and cooked thoroughly.
2. There is no advisory at this time for food establishments to switch to single-use articles (disposable cups, etc.).
3. Race, ethnicity, and national origin are not factors in the likelihood of contracting COVID-19. Cuisines reflective of regions where outbreaks are occurring pose no specific risk to consumers.
4. Food establishments should continue to practice routine environmental cleaning, including in customer areas and frequently-touched surfaces. Consider providing customer areas with tissues and alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Clean and disinfect any objects or surfaces that may have been touched by those coughing or sneezing. Sanitizers and disinfectants should only be used according to directions on the EPA-registered label.
5. Employees should stay home when sick. Brief your employees, contractors and customers that if COVID-19 starts spreading in your community anyone with even a mild cough or fever (100.4 F or more) needs to stay at home. Food establishments are encouraged to review their company's plans for absenteeism and employee health, emphasizing to staff to stay home when sick. Ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies; punitive leave policies are discouraged. Consider cross-training personnel so that the workplace is able to operate even if key staff members are absent.
6. Coordination with state and local health officials is strongly encouraged for all businesses; keep up to date on the COVID-19 situation and guidance specific to your local community.

For additional information related to COVID-19, please visit: [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov).