

Adapting restaurants and food businesses for takeaway and food delivery during COVID-19

Guidance on how to reopen and adapt food businesses to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This guidance is to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely when providing takeaway and food delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guidance from the Food Standards Agency focuses on the hygiene processes and requirements you must follow to safely operate your food business.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with [Working safely during COVID-19](#) and wider government advice on COVID-19. This will give you a practical framework to identify what you need to do to continue, adapt, or restart operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risk assessment and review

In line with wider government advice, you should make sure that the risk assessment for your business addresses the risks of COVID-19. You should use the [government social distancing guidance](#) to inform your decisions and control measures. If you have fewer than five employees, you do not have to write anything down. You should consider how this impacts on existing food safety management systems.

Food businesses which are restarting, or have made changes should review and, where necessary, update their [Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point \(HACCP\) procedures](#) or HACCP-based Food Safety Management System (such as [Safer food, better business \(SFBB\)](#) packs or [Safe Catering](#) in Northern Ireland). You should check that you have not introduced any additional hazards which you are not controlling.

You must:

- document any changes you make
- document the start-up checks you undertake
- inform your local food authority if you are restarting your food business, and of any changes to your registerable activities. This includes the introduction of a new delivery or takeaway service.

If you are restarting operations, you should review your usual start-up procedures following any shut-down and consider whether any additional procedures are needed. This should take into account the length of time your business has not been in operation. SFBB provides a [checklist for opening and closing checks](#) and advice on extra checks which should be undertaken.

Food safety

If you are a restaurant or food business providing food by delivery or takeaway, you must make sure your business is compliant with [allergen and hygiene requirements for distance selling](#).

If food is sold online or by phone through distance selling, allergen information must be provided at two stages in the order process.

You must provide allergen information:

- before the purchase of the food is completed - this can be in writing (on a website, catalogue or menu) or orally (by phone)
- when the food is delivered - this can be in writing (allergen stickers on food or an enclosed copy of a menu) or orally (by delivery driver).

If vehicles or containers have been used for transporting anything other than food, effective cleaning is required between loads to avoid the risk of contamination.

HACCP plans or HACCP-based Food Safety Management Systems need to be updated to include details of transported food.

We have more information on allergen and hygiene requirements in [Food safety for food delivery](#). The Chartered Institute for Environmental Health have published further [guidance on food delivery and takeaway during COVID-19](#).

Thorough cleaning of premises and equipment

You should carry out a thorough clean of your food premises and equipment before re-starting operations. You should consider appropriate methods to verify the effectiveness of your cleaning. We provide guidance on [cleaning effectively](#) in your business.

[Safer food, better business](#) provides advice on cleaning in specific sectors. Our [E.coli cross-contamination guidance](#) also offers a comprehensive chapter on cleaning and disinfecting.

Cleaning and disinfection

To comply with the general rules for food hygiene, you are required to have in place your own cleaning, disinfection and hygiene procedures as part of your Food Safety Management System (FSMS). This is essential to produce safe food and should reduce the risk of cross-contamination. This includes avoiding tainting and preventing microorganisms from spreading to food.

You should follow guidance on [good hygiene practices in food preparation](#). This should include ensuring that objects and surfaces that are touched regularly are frequently cleaned and disinfected using your regular cleaning products.

Any chemicals used in food establishments to [clean and disinfect food contact surfaces and equipment](#) must be approved as food safe. You are advised to follow the manufacturer's instructions for preparation and for use, paying particular attention to contact times.?

The [Safer food, better business \(SFBB\) for Caterers](#) pack ([Safe Catering](#) guide for Northern Ireland), advises food businesses to use disinfectants and sanitisers that meet BS EN standards. Because new products come onto the market and others are discontinued or change formulation, we do not hold a list of products that comply with BS EN standards.?

A [directory of disinfectants](#) is available for reference, but you should always check the label, and where necessary check with the manufacturer to ensure suitability.

Cleaning if regular products are unavailable

You should seek approved, food-safe alternatives with equivalent and effective properties if your regular cleaning and disinfecting products are not available.

Both alcohol-based sanitisers/surface disinfectants (in concentrations of 70-80%) and common disinfectants based on ammonium compounds or chlorine (bleach), can be effective. They can be applied either as a combined detergent-disinfectant solution or when adopting a two-stage approach as a disinfectant following cleaning with a detergent, in either case, food contact surfaces should be washed down with water to prevent chemical contamination of food.

You must ensure:

- the manufacturer's instructions on use are followed, including using appropriate dilution rates and contact times.
- the health and safety of staff is considered. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides [guidance on the use of chemicals in the workplace](#).
- the suitability of the chemicals for the surfaces to be cleaned and disinfected.

Further advice should be sought from a food safety consultant if required.

If alternative disinfectant products are not available, food businesses may wish to consider using heat as a Critical Control Point. Kitchen items such as knives and utensils can be put into a dishwasher, rated for disinfection, or submerged into boiling water. Surfaces can also be steam cleaned.

Managing stock

Stock control

Food businesses should ensure that any ingredients or raw materials that have passed their use-by date are disposed of appropriately. You should also inspect stocks for damage and/or signs of pest-infestation and check temperature control records if available. You should not use ingredients or raw materials where the integrity of packaging is not intact or where you are not content that adequate temperature control has been maintained.

Availability of raw materials and ingredients

You should check that you can obtain your usual raw materials and ingredients so that your product specifications can be met. Ensure any new suppliers or contractors meet your requirements. [Safer food, better business](#) guidance is available on the selection of suppliers and contractors.

Availability of consumables

You should check that you have adequate stocks of suitable cleaning chemicals and that they are in-date. This also applies to other essential consumable items such as disposable gloves.

Allergen management

You should check labelling is still available for allergens and that matrices are up to date. If your suppliers or ingredients have changed, you will need to review your processes. See our [Allergen guidance for food businesses](#) for more information.

Relabelling

If due to business closure, you decided to [freeze products](#) you would normally store, you should check labelling. You should ensure that you are able to use the food safely, taking into account product durability once defrosted and allergen management.

Staff training

By law, food business operators must ensure that food handlers receive the appropriate supervision and training in food hygiene. This should be in line with the area they work in and will enable them to handle food in the safest way. In the UK, food handlers don't have to hold a food hygiene certificate to prepare or sell food.

The skills taught in official training programmes can also be learned by:

- training on the job
- self-study
- relevant prior experience.

You should reconsider training needs for your staff, including any changes such as those made to procedures, recipes and other hygiene measures. We provide online training resources and [Safer food, better business](#) packs that can be used as a training aide.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the food industry can be for the protection of workers, and where appropriate to prevent the contamination of food during production. The current situation should not change these requirements.

You should continue to ensure that the use of PPE is as set out in your Food Safety Management System (FSMS), and in line with your current Health & Safety at Work policies. You should:

- stress the importance of more frequent handwashing and maintaining good hygiene practices in food preparation and handling areas. Employees should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- ensure that objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, are frequently cleaned, and disinfected using your regular cleaning products.

You can refer to our [Safer food, better business](#) guidance ([Safe Catering](#) in Northern Ireland) for further guidance on expected food hygiene standards.

Gloves

The Food Safety and Hygiene legislation requires that you provide safe food and have appropriate hygiene procedures in place. Some businesses may implement a glove-use policy but the wearing of gloves by personnel handling food is not a legal requirement.

The best way in which food handlers can maintain good personal hygiene is by frequently washing their hands. Gloves can be used as an aide to good food hygiene practice but should not be considered a substitute for a thorough regime of effective hand washing. The COVID-19 virus (and other viruses as well as bacteria) can contaminate disposable gloves in the same way it gets onto workers' hands.

If gloves are used, they should be changed as often as you would wash hands and you must wash your hands when changing or removing gloves. Gloves must be changed after carrying out non-food related activities, such as opening and closing doors by hand, handling money and emptying bins. Food workers should avoid touching their mouth and eyes when wearing gloves.

Face masks

There may be situations where you provide face masks to protect high-risk foods or where workers are exposed to airborne risks. If so you should continue to follow your current policies on the use of face masks.

Follow your established procedures for use of PPE in the working environment. You should also take into account [social distancing guidance](#).

Face coverings

The government has published [guidance for businesses on wearing face coverings](#).

Where your staff choose to wear face coverings, either to travel to work or in the workplace, you should put procedures in place for hygienic use, handling and storage or disposal of face coverings. Inappropriate use and handling could present a risk to food hygiene and safety.

Social distancing

It will not always be possible to keep a distance of 2 metres. In these circumstances both employers and employees must do everything they reasonably can to reduce risk.

[Working safely during COVID-19 in shops and branches](#) contains more guidance on how to implement social distancing at work and steps you can take to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus. Social distancing guidance for food delivery drivers can be found in [Working safely during COVID-19 in vehicles](#).

Food hygiene ratings

You will receive a new rating when the next planned inspection is carried out by your local authority. You can request a re-visit to get a new rating when all the necessary hygiene improvements identified at the most recent inspection have been made. Details of [how to request a re-inspection](#) are available.

However, there are likely to be delays in local authorities being able to undertake planned inspections and requested re-inspections during COVID-19.