



Important advice for Tasmanian food businesses

Key points

There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is spread via food.

Restaurants and cafes can commence in-house dining from 18 May under Stage 1 Restrictions.

Food businesses that provide takeaway or home delivery services, or are re-opening or re-commencing operations, need to:

- comply with the existing food safety requirements under the *Food Act 2003*
- follow any additional rules for managing the ongoing risk of COVID-19, such as public health emergency directions and [business restrictions](#) and the [COVID-19 Safe Workplaces Framework](#).

Guidelines and templates are available via www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au.

How is COVID-19 spread?

The COVID-19 virus most likely spreads through:

- close contact with an infectious person
- contact with droplets from an infected person's uncovered cough or sneeze
- touching objects or surfaces that have cough or sneeze droplets from an infected person, and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes.

There is no evidence that you can be infected by swallowing the virus (e.g. in or on food). Food packaging has not presented any specific risk of transmission in Australia.

How long does COVID-19 last on surfaces?

It's not yet known how long the virus survives on all surfaces. Studies suggest it may be a few hours or up to several days depending on the conditions and the type of surface. The virus can be removed from surfaces by cleaning with detergent followed by the application of common household disinfectants such as alcohol-based sanitiser or bleach.

Food businesses are required to keep premises clean, to clean and sanitise all eating and drinking utensils and all food contact surfaces. This is an existing and ongoing requirement under the relevant [Food Safety Standards](#). Under [Work Health and Safety Requirements](#) frequently touched surfaces (e.g. door handles, sink taps, handrails, switches, EFTPOS machines etc) will also need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly. This forms part of the 'minimum standards' for managing the ongoing risk of COVID-19 in all workplaces, including cafes and restaurants.

Re-opening a food business

Before re-opening or re-commencing operations, the food business should check the business restrictions, new requirements and specific guidelines at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/business-and-employees/business-restrictions. They should review all aspects of their operation and introduce steps to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission between staff and/or customers.

From Monday 18 May, restaurants and cafes can reopen and/or recommence in-house dining under [Stage One Restrictions](#). This allows seated table service for up to 10 patrons (this number excludes staff). Delivery and takeaway services can continue.

- Each setting where dining occurs must **not** have a density of seated patrons greater than one per four square metres.
- The restriction on the number of diners applies to the venue as a whole unless the venue has multiple separate dining rooms (please see below for further guidance).
- Restaurants may continue to offer delivery and takeaway services. For restaurants and cafes doing seated meals and takeaway, the takeaway customers can be in addition to the 10 seated customers provided that physical distancing rules are met.
- Multiple timed sittings are permitted as long as at any point in time the seated patron rules and limits are met.
- Food must be consumed by each patron. Alcohol-only service is not allowed.
- Contact details for the person making the booking must be kept in case future contact tracing is needed.
- Restaurants and cafes will require a COVID-19 Safety Plan detailing measures to manage the risks of transmission of COVID-19 at their venue.

For a single business or premises that have multiple dining rooms (e.g. upstairs and downstairs, separate rooms on one level, or an indoor and separate outdoor area), the following principles apply:

- Each premises may have no more than two separate dining areas of 10 seated patrons.
- Each dining area must **not** have a density of seated patrons greater than one per four square metres. To seat 10 patrons the area must be a minimum of 40 square metres. If the dining area is smaller than 40 square metres, fewer patrons are allowed.
- The dining areas will ideally have separate entry/exits points. If they don't, the venue must take steps to minimise opportunities for people to mix whilst waiting for a table and social distancing rules apply to any queuing). This could include staged arrivals for bookings.
- Each dining area must have separate wait staff.
- There is no requirement for separate kitchens or toilets per dining area. However, appropriate cleaning must be scheduled and undertaken.

Where there are multiple, discrete restaurants and cafes on the same site:

- Each restaurant or cafe can operate as if it's a separate business according to the rules outlined above. For example, with one dining area for up to 10 patrons or, where there are separate dining areas, with no more than two dining areas for up to 10 patrons each.

At a minimum, food businesses must adhere to the food safety requirements in the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code* in addition to the physical distancing and hygiene principles together with their [COVID-19 Safe Plan](#). It is recommended that businesses:

- provide hand sanitiser for customers at the entrance to the business
- discourage customers from queuing but if it must occur (e.g. at the entrance or service counter), provide guidance on where to stand for physical distancing (i.e. 1.5 metres apart)
- increase cleaning regimes for all areas within the premises. [The cleaning guidance for food processing facilities](#) from Safe Work Australia may help to improve cleaning schedules.

There can be risks associated with re-opening or re-commencing operations in a business that has been closed for a period of time. This food safety checklist may help businesses preparing to re-open:

www.foodstandards.gov.au/industry/Documents/Recommencing%20operations%20checklist%202020.pdf.

Note that food businesses are not required to have a food safety inspection before re-opening in Tasmania.

Shared items

- Businesses should try to limit handling of shared surfaces between customers. For example, menus, condiments, drinking straws and other items on dining tables or service counters. Consider removing these items or cleaning and disinfecting them between dining groups.
- Tables and chairs should be cleaned and disinfected between dining groups.
- Provide the required amount of cutlery to customers on the table rather than offering self-service of cutlery.
- There is no evidence to suggest there is any benefit in switching to disposable, single use food and beverage containers, cutlery and crockery in cafes and restaurants. A business may continue to use standard containers, cutlery and crockery with proper cleaning and sanitising.

Where can I find more information?

For information about COVID-19:

- View the Tasmanian Government information at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au
- Call the Business Tasmania Hotline 1800 440 026
- Visit the WorkSafe website www.worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/Health-and-Safety/safety-alerts/coronavirus.

For specific food safety information:

- Speak to an Environmental Health Officer at your local council.
- Speak to a Food Safety Officer at the Department of Health by calling 1800 671 738 (select Option 6).
- View information provided by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) at www.foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/safety/Pages/NOVEL-CORONAVIRUS-AND-FOOD-SAFETY.aspx