



Renfrew County and District Health Unit

COVID-19 Guidance for Re-Opening Restaurant & Bar Patios

The Ontario government identified that restaurants, bars, food trucks and other food and drink establishments (e.g. wineries, breweries and distilleries) **can open for dining in outdoor areas only**, such as patios, curbside, parking lots and adjacent premises.

This guide describes the requirements of Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) to set up the patio and ensure your practices reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. Operators should also refer to guidance from the Ministry of Labour. This Ministry guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from RCDHU about food safety, or the [Ontario Food Premises Regulations](#).

A. General requirements to operate a patio

- Patios can have tents/structures/canopies but must be open on at least 2 sides to allow for adequate air circulation. The covering should be as high as possible from the ground – minimum height of 3 metres is recommended. Existing patios that have walls (i.e. glass barriers), cannot install a roof covering. Always consult with the health unit if erecting a tent.
- In the event of rainfall, customers may not move indoors.
- Live music is prohibited. If you provide recorded music, turn down the volume. Loud music causes diners to lean towards each other and raise their voices or shout, thus increasing the risk of transmitting the virus.

B. Liquor sales licensees

- Contact your local municipality before extending the physical size of an existing licensed patio or adding a new licensed patio.
- The [Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario](#) (AGCO) requires licensed establishments to have municipal approval and meet all other AGCO requirements. Contact AGCO toll free in Ontario: 1-800-522-2876 for guidance.

C. Physical distancing strategies

- Remove waiting area seating. Decide how you will ensure that customers stay separate and maintain physical distancing while waiting to be seated.
- Consider reservations only to avoid line-ups. Outline the floor with markers for any areas where a line-up may occur.
- Provide customers with one means of entering and one means of exiting the patio.
- Keep chairs well away from high traffic areas and where the roof structure is low hanging (less than 3 metres).
- Rearrange or remove seating and tables or mark as unavailable to ensure a minimum of two metres between each edge of every table. **The required distance between adjacent edges of tables is two metres.**
- Temporary table dividers may be installed to make physical distancing easier for patios with communal or larger tables.



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- Groups must be seated two metres from another group. Co-mingling should be avoided.
- Persons within the group from differing households must maintain physical distancing of 2 metres.

D. Protection for staff

- Rearrange equipment and/or processes in the kitchen and other areas used by staff so that a two metre distance is always achievable. If not feasible, staff must wear masks.
- If necessary, rearrange pick-up by servers to maintain distance (e.g. use the bar as a serving area).
- If necessary, install barriers (e.g. Plexiglas) to protect staff (e.g. host desk) or customers.
- Reconfigure break rooms/areas and eating areas for staff to physically distance.
- Limit the time servers spend within two metres of customers.
- Allow space for the safe circulation of customers and staff between tables.
- Mark direction of travel to designate entrances and exits, pick up areas and washrooms.

E. Provide direction to customers

- Post signage promoting physical distancing upon entry.
- Install directional arrows (e.g. at entrance/exit) if possible.
- Erect signage for physical distancing, passive screening, and any policies affecting them.
- The use of non-medical masks or face coverings is strongly encouraged in public spaces where physical distancing is difficult to maintain. Operators may require their customers to wear them, except when eating.

F. Develop protocols and procedures

- Policies for customers: for example, reservations preferred/only; payment by credit or debit card preferred/only.
- Menus: single-use paper, online for customers' mobile devices, menu-boards, chalkboards, or regular menus cleaned between uses.
- Tables: do not pre-set tables; utensils should be rolled or packaged.
- Table items: replace regular condiments with single-serve versions, or sanitize between uses, use disposable napkins, etc.
- Staffing: for example, stagger shifts and breaks, update absence policies, and new protocols for back filling absences.

G. Staff screening for illness

- Owner/operators must conduct active screening of each staff person when they report for duty by asking screening questions.
- Staff are not to work if showing symptoms of COVID-19. Staff must report any



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symptoms developed during shift to their supervisor.

- Staff should be aware of COVID-19 precautions, and physically distance as much as possible, including with other staff. Staff congregating can be a high risk for COVID-19 transmission.

H. Signage

All signage listed below must be posted and visible to staff and customers.

- [Handwashing](#)
- [Physical distancing](#)
- COVID-19 Employee Screening Questionnaire – to be completed by staff at every shift.
- COVID-19 Screening Poster – to be completed by clients before entering the shop.

I. Cleaning and disinfection

- Make a list of all steps you will take to clean/sanitize surfaces and equipment.
- Give attention to key touch points and objects including food contact surfaces, hand contact areas, door handles, switches, table tops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers, shared equipment such as credit card machines and cash registers.
- Supply dispensers for hand sanitizer (at least 70% alcohol) to staff and customers, including at the door.
- Use only [approved hard-surface disinfectants](#).
- Thoroughly clean the premises before opening and after closing each day, and tables/chairs in between customers.
- Minimize unnecessary contact between customers and staff (e.g. place clearly visible numbers on tables and ask customers to seat themselves. Minimize the time staff spend within two metres of customers).
- Review details on [cleaning and disinfection](#).

J. Train staff

- Train staff on how best to serve food, maintain safe physical distancing and avoid unnecessary handling (e.g. serve to front of table and let customers distribute, avoid handling coffee cups when refilling, let customer fill/pack leftovers in containers).
- Install directional arrows to direct employees and minimize direct contact.
- Practice physical distancing during breaks.
- Assign staff to specific tasks and minimize contact between them.
- Ensure staff have access to gloves and masks as needed. Masks must be worn where physical distancing cannot be maintained with both patrons and other employees.
- Train staff in proper use of gloves and masks. Gloves are not essential, but, if used, must be changed frequently and hands washed between uses.
- Encourage frequent handwashing using the correct technique, and to avoid



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touching the face.

- You can find training related to COVID-19 precautions at <https://courses.advance-education.com/>.

K. During active operation

- The owner/operator, or another person appointed for that purpose, should be present and checking to ensure adherence to protocols.
- Screening of staff for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in a food premises is critical. All measures must be taken to ensure staff are well before interacting with customers and colleagues. Ensure that screening of each employee occurs before each shift.
- Do not allow staff members who are sick to come to work. If staff are sick, they should go home and stay home. They must also complete the COVID-19 self-assessment tool and/or contact their primary health provider and get tested.
- Ensure customers are physically distancing while waiting; have them wait outdoors when necessary but ensure that they do not impinge on the space of patrons on the patio.
- Customers who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should be refused entry. Display posters telling customers if they have symptoms, they cannot enter.
- All customers must be seated; service to standing customers (e.g. in bar areas) is prohibited.
- Create and maintain cleaning and sanitation logs.

L. Contact tracing

- Operators should keep logs of the first name and telephone number (or e-mail address) from one person in each party (this may be provided when making a reservation), and keep this, together with a record of the table number and the date and time for at least 30 days.
- This information may be requested by RCDHU to assist with tracing contacts of someone who ate at your restaurant and subsequently developed COVID-19. You may also be required to post a notice of data collection for legal purposes.

More information:

For assistance related to cleaning practices or wearing personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, etc.) contact the Health Unit at 613-735-8654, ext. 555.

Operators who need support finding personal protective equipment can contact the provincial government for further information at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/how-your-organization-can-help-fight-coronavirus> or call 1-888-777-0554.

Visit our website at www.rcdhu.com.