

Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Food Sector

Keeping employees and customers safe – adaptable information for food sector businesses

What is COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without special treatment. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems, are more likely to develop serious illness that can result in death. (World Health Organization)

How to Avoid it

COVID-19 spreads primarily through droplets of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. To avoid catching or transmitting the disease:



Maintain a safe social distance of 2 meters from others. Work in zones, in some cases add a plastic or other divider between employees.



Use clean uniforms, facemasks, shoe covers, head covers and face shields or goggles.



Wash hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water.



Sanitize hands when entering the workplace and regularly throughout the day. Avoid alcohol-based sanitizers when possible as these can cause allergic reactions or damage skin.



Gloves must be changed frequently and hands must be washed between glove changes and when gloves are removed. Gloves must be changed after carrying out non-food related activities, such as opening/closing doors by hand, and emptying bins.



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. This can be difficult: studies show people touch their face up to 23 times an hour. Self-monitoring, and wearing a mask and goggles can help.



Cover your mouth and nose with a bent elbow when coughing or sneezing, even if a mask is being worn.



Dispose of or wash used facemasks, uniforms and gloves quickly and carefully, ensuring they are not left in the workspace or around food.

These guidelines are drawn from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the United States. For more information visit: <https://www.who.int> and <https://www.fda.gov/home>

IFC's Global Food Safety Program

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