

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR FOOD PREMISES – STEP 3

Last revised: February 17, 2022

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). This document provides guidance and clarity for food premises that are at Step 3 by following [Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas in Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit Step](#) (O. Reg. 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Approach to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

The Ontario government requires patrons 12 years and 12 weeks of age or older to be [fully vaccinated against COVID-19](#) and provide proof of vaccination and proof of identify with an original identification document (photocopies of ID and digital versions (stored in phone) are generally not acceptable, but allowed for youth aged 12-17 years) to access certain businesses and organizations, with limited exemptions. More information can be found in [O. Reg. 364/20](#), in the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#) and [question and answer resource](#), on SMDHU's [website](#) and in the proof of vaccination section below.

HOW TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 DURING FOOD SERVICE OPERATION

The owner/operator, or assigned staff, should be present and checking to ensure adherence to the following protocols:

SAFETY PLAN

- A [safety plan](#) must be written and available on request. A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons.
- The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location, including but not limited to, screening, proof of vaccination verification process, physical distancing (where applicable), masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment, and preventing and controlling crowds.
- Additional guidance on how to develop a safety plan can be found [here](#).

CAPACITY LIMITS

- The total number of patrons permitted to be seated **outdoors at nightclubs and bars** is limited to 75 per cent capacity. Seventy-five per cent capacity is determined by taking the total square meters of the outdoor space used and dividing by 1.33. The result shall be rounded down to the nearest whole number, as calculated in accordance with [O. Reg. 213/07 \(Fire Code\)](#).
- **NEW:** The total number of patrons permitted to be seated **indoors at nightclubs and bars** is limited to 25 per cent capacity. Twenty-five per cent capacity is determined by taking maximum occupant load of the business or facility as calculated in accordance with Ontario Regulation 213/07 (Fire Code).
- **NEW:** Supermarkets, grocery stores and convenience stores are limited to the total number of members of the public permitted that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the establishment

SCREENING AND RECORD KEEPING

- All staff must be [actively screened](#) before attending work each day and follow the direction provided.
- Patrons of restaurants, bars and other food or drink establishments must be [actively screened](#) before entering the facility. Individuals who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms, should be refused entry into the premise.
- Please see the province's [website](#) for direction on screening employees/workers and patrons.

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PROOF OF VACCINATION

- Operators of food premises are required to check and verify proof of vaccination (via [enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code](#)) and proof of identify with an original identification document (photocopies of ID and digital versions (stored in phone) are generally not acceptable, but allowed for youth aged 12-17 years) of all **patrons** 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older, at the point of entry of the indoor areas of food establishments for dine-in purposes, with limited exceptions.
 - Patrons of dine-in mall food courts or quick service restaurants can provide proof of vaccine information at the counter where food is ordered and paid for.
 - Providing proof of vaccination does not apply to cafeteria settings in schools, post-secondary, or places of businesses, or food premises for takeout and delivery purposes.
- Individuals are **required** to use a digital or printed paper copy of the [enhanced vaccine certificate with QR code](#) (vaccine receipts are no longer accepted) with limited exemptions for members of nine First Nations communities and visitors from outside of Canada. See the province's [proof of vaccination guidance](#) and [question and answer resource](#) for more information.
- Operators are required to verify proof of vaccination using the [Verify Ontario app](#) (visual verification is no longer acceptable) in settings where proof of vaccination is in effect.
- Patrons 12 years and 12 weeks of age and older who are unable to provide proof of vaccination or valid proof of an eligible [medical exemption](#) where required must be refused entry to the facility.
- Operators are advised not to accept physician notes as medical exemptions. Those with eligible medical exemptions will have access to a certificate with QR code that can be verified using the [Verify Ontario app](#).
- As per [O. Reg. 364/20](#), proof of vaccination is not required where the following exception(s) apply when:
 - using the washroom,
 - accessing an outdoor area that can only be accessed through an indoor route,
 - making a retail purchase,
 - placing, picking up or paying for an order,
 - purchasing admission, or
 - where necessary for the purposes of health and safety.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- It is recommended that servers limit the time spent within 2 metres (6 feet) of patrons.

USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Every person indoors shall wear a mask or [face covering](#) in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless exemptions apply as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- **NEW:** Every persons using **outdoor space at a nightclub or bar** shall wear a mask or [face covering](#) in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless exemptions apply as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
- It is recommended that all individuals wear a [well-fitted](#) high quality 3-layered non-medical mask, medical mask or respirator (i.e., N95s, KN95).
- Masks can only be removed:
 - to eat and drink while seated, or
 - for health and safety reasons.
- Staff are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone without a mask in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose, and chin (e.g., servers serving food to a patrons table).
- Post [signage](#) that promotes wearing a mask or face covering at entrances.

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IN-ESTABLISHMENT ACTIVITIES

- **NEW:** Dancing is only permitted in food establishments that offer dancing facilities (nightclubs, bars etc.)
- If live entertainment is performed, the performer(s) must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from any spectators or be separated from any spectators by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.

OUTDOOR DINING

- If an outdoor area of the business or place is covered by a roof, canopy, tent, awning, or other element – at least two full sides of the entire outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers; and
- If an outdoor area at the business or place is equipped with a retractable roof and the roof is retracted, at least one full side of the outdoor area must be open to the outdoors and must not be substantially blocked by any walls or other impermeable physical barriers.

HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

- Make alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content available at the entrances and exits.
- Encourage all visitors to wash or sanitize their hands often using alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content, especially as they arrive at the facility.
 - Glove use does not replace handwashing. Ensure hands are washed before and after handling food, after handling dirty utensils, using the bathroom, handling cash, etc. Gloves are to be replaced/changed at this time as well.
- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing posters and [Cover Your Cough](#) posters in areas that can be clearly seen. Sample signage can be found [here](#).
- Where possible, open windows and keep doors open to increase air flow.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
 - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, door handles, switches, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers, credit card machines, baby change tables, and surfaces frequently touched in business vehicles.
- Dining tables are to be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition **and** between sittings.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#). Ensure products are not expired and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Health Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection as well as proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and immunization.

SIGNAGE

Post signs promoting wearing masks/face coverings, handwashing, physical distancing, proof of vaccination and capacity limits (for nightclubs and bars) and make them visible to staff and patrons. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

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SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO ACT, 2017 (SFOA) COMPLIANCE AND PATIOS

Patios/Outdoor Food Service Areas

Smoking of tobacco and cannabis and vaping of any substance is prohibited on patios and within 9 metres of a patio where food and drink are served, including outdoor areas where seating tables are provided for patrons to consume their meal or beverage.

Signs

Operators are required to post SFOA dual no-smoking/no-vaping signs as required by law throughout the venue at entrances and exits to all buildings and their washroom facilities, including outdoor washrooms and smoke-free outdoor patios serving food and/or beverages. Signs are available from the health unit.

OTHER GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Operators should also refer to guidance from the [Government of Ontario](#). The Government of Ontario guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from SMDHU about food safety or the [Ontario Food Premises Regulations](#).

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Health Connection line if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

While the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit aims to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to, nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional. No one should act, or refrain from acting, based solely upon the materials provided in this guidance, any hypertext links or other general information without first seeking appropriate legal or other professional advice. Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website regularly for updates and additional guidance.