

COVID-19 Update

Talbot County Emergency Services
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GUIDANCE FOR TALBOT COUNTY RESTAURANTS FOR OUTSIDE DINING

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Maryland Department of Health plans to issue more guidance on restaurants and outside dining. The following guidance is to be used in Talbot County until more restrictive guidance is issued by MDH.

- Talbot County is allowing outside dining, though municipalities may enact stricter regulations. Check with town officials before opening outdoor seating to the public.
- No special permit is needed for outside dining in Talbot County.
- If any grilling or cooking is planned outside, approval/permit is needed.

The Governor's Orders allows innovative planning for outside dining ***IF*** six-foot distancing is maintained and all staff wear appropriate face coverings.

1. Converting a portion of the parking lot for outside dining (when space is available for parking also, either on site or close by).
2. Municipalities can allow street closures to allow restaurants to use sidewalks for outdoor dining. If you are located inside town limits, please check with the town leadership about closing streets.
3. Using patios for outside dining currently is permissible in Talbot County.
4. Tents with four sides and top are not permitted since they present more of the indoor problems. Top coverings with open sides are permitted at this time in Talbot County. Please note: state officials are discussing more guidance on the use of top coverings and could later release more restrictive guidance.
5. With any option, tables must be spaced so that people are at least six-feet apart.
6. Only six people are allowed at a single table unless all members are of the same household.

The following precautions will decrease the likelihood of virus spread:

1. Signage about social distancing should be posted at the restaurant entrance.

COVID-19 Update

2. All staff should be asked about symptoms or contacts with known cases of COVID-19 at the onset of each shift. Temperatures do not have to be taken, but anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms including fever, cough, shortness of breath, or loss of taste or smell should not be allowed to work and must be sent home immediately. Anyone having contact with a known COVID-19 case during the past 14 days should be quarantined and not working.
3. Allowing customers to consume their carry-out orders outside at appropriately spaced tables is the safest approach.
4. Serving outside is allowed, but all staff must wear face coverings. At this time, the CDC does not allow face shields to replace facial coverings. Both may be used for greater safety, but a shield cannot be substituted for a mask/cloth covering used for filtering.
5. Menus are a risk when handled by the customers. Options include:
 - A. Paper menus disposed of after customer use.
 - B. Laminated menus displayed outside, at the entry, on stands 6-feet apart for people waiting in line to order. Post signage asking customers not to touch these menus, but still have staff disinfect every hour during heavy traffic.
 - C. Menus laminated or in plastic covering and disinfected after every customer.
 - D. Menus on website so customers can decide their order before reaching restaurant.
6. Tables should not have condiments or napkin holders on them.
 - A. Salt and pepper, sugar, ketchup, salad dressing, creamers, and other condiments should only be offered in individual packages. Orders for condiments also may be placed on the food or in the container for carry-out orders. Individual packages are not to be placed on a table inside or outside the restaurant for the customers to access themselves.
 - B. Napkins are to be provided with the carry-out order or brought by the wait staff.
 - C. Plastic and paper plates and separately wrapped plastic utensils have been recommended and decrease exposure to customers and wait staff. However, they are not required in Talbot County at this time. Cloth napkins also are permitted. The risk is low for transmitting the virus in this fashion so washable utensils and cloth napkins are acceptable. Restaurants might consider using paper and plastic to reassure their customers. MDH has promised to issue final statement on this, so this could become more restrictive.
 - D. Buffet tables are not allowed.
7. A touchless payment process should be used. If paying inside, the credit card or cash should be placed on a small tray by a customer and picked up by the clerk at the register. Any change or the card should be handled in reverse order with the tray. The credit card would still need to be wiped with a disinfectant that should be located at the check-out station. The clerk may do this and place the card in

COVID-19 Update

the tray or provide the wipe for the customer at the counter. If possible, it is best for customers to pay by credit card to decrease the risk of transferring the virus through touching. However, paper currency does not transmit the virus as easily as plastic credit cards. After cash transactions, the customer and clerk both should use hand sanitizer. If credit card machines are available for customers to slide their cards, these should be disinfected after each use.

8. Many businesses ask about staff using gloves. The clerk at the cash register might want to wear gloves, but that person must realize that the gloves can transmit the virus. Often people with gloves are not as likely to touch their face around the nose or eye area, but if they do then the gloves can transmit the virus and infect them. Unfortunately, people wearing gloves often do not wash them in soap and water or use sanitizer. This can result in the gloves putting people at higher risk if they still touch their face with contaminated gloves. Gloves can place customers at higher risk if wait staff wear the gloves during their entire shift, cleaning tables and touching dishes and utensils used by multiple customers. Also sanitizing gloves while wearing them is not as effective as sanitizing hands. Frequent hand washing and use of sanitizer can be better at decreasing the transmission of the virus than gloves. Owners and managers must take responsibility for training their staff to take precautions to avoid infecting themselves and customers and this means frequent washing with soap and water and use of sanitizers.
9. Restrooms must be open and attention should be given to keeping them clean. Signage about social distancing should be posted on the restroom door.

If staff understand how the virus is transmitted, then they can do things safer for themselves and their customers. Social distancing is by far the best precaution because the droplets produced when breathing and talking don't usually travel six feet before falling to the ground/floor. All staff interacting with the public are wearing the face coverings to protect the customers, not themselves. Not all people realize this, but those customers that understand the reason for the facial covering will not appreciate restaurant staff putting customers at risk by staff not wearing a face covering and not wearing it properly covering the nose.