

# COVID-19 Sale of food

## Restriction on buffets and self-service foods

This circular provides guidance for operators of retail food businesses to assist them in reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19.

### Who needs to take action?

A person who owns, operates or controls a retail food business that includes buffets and/or self-service foods needs to take action. This may include businesses that sell fresh food and groceries and those providing food and/or drink, whether pre-prepared or prepared on site. Examples of food businesses include cafes, restaurants, fast-food outlets, supermarkets, retail shops and vending machines. Those businesses that may not require a food business licence are also included, for example, those selling packaged snack food and/or drinks, such as coffee, soft drinks, flavoured ice and water. Non-profit organisations may also need to take action.

### What is the risk?

While COVID-19 is generally spread from one person to another through respiratory droplets, transmission can also occur through touching an object or surface that has been infected by another person and then transferring the virus to the mouth, nose, or possibly eyes. The shared use of tongs, scoops, spoons or other utensils or equipment used for self-service and buffets which may be touched by multiple people increases the risk of spreading COVID-19.

### Action to be taken

#### Buffets and self-serve restriction

To assist in containing the spread of COVID-19 within the community, the Chief Health Officer's public health direction, [Restrictions on Businesses, Activities and Undertakings Direction](#) prohibits buffets and self-service at retail food businesses. It is important that all retail food businesses take action to remove or restrict access to self-serve foods or provide specific arrangements to serve or package the food. Self-serve foods to be removed, or access restricted, may include but are not limited to:

- self-serve buffet foods
- self-service foods such as salads, meats, cheese, olives, cereal, nuts and delicatessen items
- shared menu items or grazing plates are to be served on individual plates and separate cutlery provided for each person.

## Conveyor style sushi food service

Conveyor style sushi bars/trains are permitted only where food is provided as single-serve items and the food is protected with a cover. Items removed from the conveyor are not to be returned. Signage can be provided to advise patrons that items are not to be returned to the conveyor. Should condiments be provided, they are to be packaged as single-serve items.

## Bulk food dispensing

To help avoid the transmission of COVID-19 through surface contact, it is important that frequent washing and sanitising of all common contact surfaces is conducted.

Cleaning and sanitising common contact surfaces between customers, or at least hourly, is important in reducing the spread of COVID-19 on surfaces including:

- gravity dispensing bin handles and bulk bin lids and scoops. These bulk containers may contain grains, seeds, nuts, dried fruit and other snack or confectionary items
- tongs used to package bread and other bakery products
- tongs or other utensils used to package fresh produce such as salad leaves and dates.

## Vending machines

Common contact surfaces of vending machines are to be kept clean and sanitised between customers or at least hourly. Examples of vending machines may include:

- food and drink product dispensers
- self-serve beverage machines such as coffee, juice or slushy dispensers.

## Further precautions

Precautions food businesses could introduce to ensure staff and customers reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19 include:

- request that customers sanitise their hands before entering the business
- encourage physical distancing to the extent possible
- provide specific staff to serve customers
- frequent washing and sanitising of all food contact surfaces including counters, containers, equipment and utensils
- clean reusable BYO cups are allowed to be used where staff can do a 'contactless pour'
- condiments must be single serve items
- ensure physical distancing measures are in place
- staff must practice frequent hand washing including before and after serving or packaging food
- remind customers of the importance of washing hands regularly and practicing good respiratory hygiene (sneeze and cough etiquette).

Businesses are required to comply with the [Chief Health Officer public health directions](#). Non-compliance may result in the issuing of an Infringement Notice.

## Further information

Cleaning and sanitising: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-about-routine-environmental-cleaning-and-disinfection-in-the-community>

Coronavirus updates and information: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19>

Queensland Health Public Health Units: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/contact/public-health-units>

Local Government Directory: <http://www.dlgrma.qld.gov.au/local-government/local-government-directory/search-the-local-government-directory.html>