COVID-19 instructions for catering establishments, pubs, bars, nightclubs, and other gathering places

- COVID-19 is an infectious viral disease which spreads from person to person by means of the projection of aerosols, mainly though coming into close contact with infectious persons.
- If conditions are favourable, the virus can survive on contaminated surfaces for up to three days, but it can be destroyed through cleaning and disinfection.
- The risk of the spread of COVID-19 is at its highest in enclosed, crowded, and poorly ventilated rooms.
- The aim of these instructions is to provide guidelines for nightclubs, bars, pubs, lounges, and other catering establishments and gathering places for the safe provision of their services under the conditions of the spread of COVID-19.

The cleanliness of the premises and proper ventilation

- It must be ensured that air that is mechanically supplied and removed in the form of a ventilation system can be supplied through a system that is fully functional and which has been switched on. The requirements of regulation No 8 by the Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure of 2 April 2020 on further requirements for the ventilation and aeration of a social welfare institution building or a non-residential building during the state of emergency must be followed.
- The premises must be regularly cleaned and disinfected by using the usual methods and cleaning materials.
- Frequently used objects and surfaces (including counters) should be cleaned and disinfected every two to four hours. Such objects and surfaces include toilets, door handles, bar counters, tables, chairs, etc.
- Serve bread and cutlery in vessels which can be regularly cleaned (at least three or four times in each working day).
- Regularly clean any surfaces and objects which come in contact with food (including menus, condiment and sauce vessels, bread baskets, counters, and so on), and at least three or four times in each working day.
- Packaging and utensils which are used for selling takeaway food and drinks or for consuming them on site must be stored in a manner which helps to prevent their potential contamination.
- If possible, any business which offers food or drink tasting services should ensure that the individual who is serving the products, as well as any customers, can maintain the appropriate hand hygiene routines and can also maintain the required distance from other individuals.
- Any waste which may have been contaminated with the virus (such as tissues, masks, etc) should be disposed of pursuant to the following instructions: www.envir.ee/et/uudised/koroonajaatmed-tuleb-teistest-eemal-hoida.
- The advice of the Health Board in terms of cleaning and disinfection should be followed.

Customers

- The number of customers on any business premises may never exceed up to 50% of the maximum capacity. Pursuant to an order by the Estonian government, any groups of individuals in catering and entertainment establishments must stay at least two metres apart. While doing that, one group may consist of up to ten individuals. This restriction does not apply to members of the same family or hobby group, and is not applicable in children’s play areas. Capacity and proper distances are calculated based on the total volume of floor space in terms of square metres which is intended for customer use, and on the surface area of the premises which is designed for use by customers. The business must be prepared to present the rental contract for the premises or its fire safety plan which specifies this information if required to do so.
- The order by the Government of the Republic also establishes restrictions for the opening times of catering and entertainment establishments: all establishments must be closed from midnight to six in the morning to avoid gatherings. This restriction does not apply to selling takeaway food.
- Information material and signage must be posted within the premises of commercial undertakings in order to facilitate social distancing.
- Information must be posted on the business website, its social media accounts, and beside the entry into the premises so that customers are properly notified that they are not permitted to enter the premises or remain upon the premises if they have even the slightest suspicion of having been infected, and that the business operates under the obligation to remove any such individuals from its premises.
Any customers who enter the business premises must be identified and any customers who are under the required age limit for entering the premises must be rejected.

The business must give customers the opportunity to register their personal details (name and telephone number). It should be disclosed to customers that such details are disclosed on a voluntary basis. The details will be used later if it becomes necessary to notify the customer of potential contact with an individual who has been infected.

It must be ensured that anyone who is using the business premises is maintaining the required social distancing from anyone else on the premises. The required signage must be displayed to facilitate this.

Customers should be encouraged to use the Hoia mobile phone app. The app notifies individuals who have come into close contact (lasting more than fifteen minutes within a distance of two metres) with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Any customers who are exhibiting signs of intoxication must be removed from the premises and no alcohol may be sold to those customers.

Customers must be able to wash their hands or, if this is not possible, to sanitise their hands.

The means for sanitising one’s hands must be installed in visible places by the main routes used by the customers, including next to entries and exits.

Hand-washing and sanitising stations must be equipped with the relevant instructions.

Toilets must be equipped with plenty of soap and disposable towels for drying hands. From the perspective of infection prevention, it is safer to use disposable towels instead of hand dryers.

Information materials should be posted in a visible location for customers so that they can easily be reminded of the following points:

- the need to stay at home if they are ill or if they exhibit even mild symptoms (including a mild case of head cold, sore throat, itchy throat, a cough, and so on);
- the need to follow the rules regarding hand hygiene;
- the need to maintain the required social distancing from others;
- the requirement that drinking vessels and crockery which has been designed for individual use should not be shared with others.

As of 24 November 2020, COVID-19, officially referred to as SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2), is included in hazard group 3 of biological hazards. In the case of all work that is accompanied by a risk of coming into contact with biological hazards, the employer must determine the type, extent, and duration of the risk to the employee of their being infected during the course of carrying out the working environment risk analysis and, based on this, assess the risk to the employee’s health, implementing any necessary precautionary measures. The precautions are introduced on the Labour Inspectorate’s ‘Tööelu’ website.

The employer must make sure that all employees are aware of the main measures which can be implemented to prevent the passing-on of respiratory diseases.

It must be stressed to employees that they are not permitted to come into work or to remain at work in the case of there being even the smallest suspicion of their having been infected. A procedure must be established in order to make sure that no employee who has fallen ill remains on the business premises.

Close contact between employees and customers must be minimised.* If this is not possible, provide employees with personal protective equipment such as visors and masks.

Employees should be advised to use the Hoia app. The app notifies individuals who have come into close contact (lasting at least fifteen minutes within a distance of two metres) with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Employees must be able to wash their hands regularly. The instructions that have been provided for washing hands must be followed.

If it is not possible to wash one’s hands, then hands must be sanitised with a hand antiseptic by following the respective instructions. Visibly dirty hands must always be washed.

Collective means of protection and personal protective equipment must be issued to employees based on the results of the risk analysis for the working environment, and training must be organised to show the proper and safe use of such equipment. Instructions can be found on the Health Board’s website.

Work clothing must be washed regularly using a procedure which is followed by all business employees. The clothing of any employee who has fallen ill must be washed immediately.
• Clothing or other tools and equipment which are used at work should not be taken home if possible.

When an employee falls ill with a viral upper respiratory tract disease (fever, cough, lack of energy, and other symptoms)

• An employee who falls ill outside of the working hours must stay at home.
• An employee who falls ill at work must leave immediately.
• The employee must contact their family physician who will determine whether or not that person should be diagnosed with COVID-19, plus their need to be tested, and the need for a certificate to be signed to show their incapacity for work.
• From the perspective of slowing down the spread of COVID-19, it is important for any employee who has fallen ill to notify their employer of their COVID-19 diagnosis being confirmed. The employer must be notified in a manner which has been agreed between the employee and the employer.
• Any premises which may have been contaminated with the virus must be closed to third parties and should be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected, and ventilated before reopening.
• If a diagnosis of COVID-19 is confirmed, the employer must identify all persons who have come into close contact with an employee who has fallen ill at their place of work, and within the period after the employee has become symptomatic or up until two days before they became symptomatic.* The employer must cooperate with the relevant Health Board regional department to determine close contacts. Close contacts must stay at home for a period of fourteen days and should monitor their health condition carefully. The duration of the required period of self-isolation can be reduced by testing negative for SARS-CoV-2 at least ten days after having come into close contact with someone who has been infected.
• Remaining employees may continue to carry out their daily duties, but should also keep an eye on their health.
• If the COVID-19 diagnosis is not confirmed for an employee who has fallen ill, all other employees may continue to carry out their duties, but must monitor their health over the following fourteen days.

HANDS MUST BE WASHED:
• before commencing work
• before handling heat-treated or ready-made food
• after handling or preparing food which was not heat-treated
• after handling waste
• after carrying out cleaning operations;
• after using the toilet
• after blowing one’s nose, sneezing, or coughing
• after eating, drinking, or smoking
• after handling cash

*CLOSE CONTACT IS CLASSED AS BEING:
• direct physical contact with an individual who has been infected with COVID-19 (such as shaking hands)
• direct contact without any protection with secretions from the respiratory tract of a person who has been infected with COVID-19 (such as being coughed on)
• being within a distance of up to two metres of a person who has been infected with COVID-19 for

Guidelines and advice are available at:
The Health Board’s COVID-19-related publications and instructions
The advice of the Veterinary and Food Office to food business operators in connection with coronavirus
The Labour Inspectorate’s advice to the employer and employee

COVID-19 instructions for gathering places