



## Current novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

### **Small Business Owners: What You Should Know About Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

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Small businesses play a critical role in providing goods and services to our neighborhoods. Many local businesses cannot be provided online such as our personal care services e.g. barbershops, beauty and nail salons, convenience stores and bodegas and our local restaurants. As such, it is important that you take every measure to keep your customers safe and to keep yourself and your employees safe from your customers.

#### **Hand-washing & Cover your cough**

As a small business owner, you are on the front lines and you need to be vigilant. You must be a role model for your employees and customers with good hygiene practices. Frequently wash your hands throughout the day for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Employees must be educated to cover their cough into their sleeves in the elbow and not in the palms of their hand. Put up signs about proper hand-washing by all sinks and signs about proper coughing/sneezing so they can be viewed frequently.



# Wash Your Hands



Rinse hands



Use soap



Palm to palm



Back to hands



Base of thumbs



Finger interlaced



Wrists



Fingernails

## Cleaning

Now would be a good time to consider giving your place of business a deep cleaning (Consider it a Spring Cleaning). At a minimum, clean all surfaces frequently touched by customers such as the doorknobs, door handles, push bars on doors, the doors themselves if customers can push them open with their hands, railings in hallways and stairwells, sinks and paper towel dispensers. Consider propping open interior doors with doorstops to allow for entry without touching. If you have counters or display cases customers frequently touch, don't just clean but sanitize. Think of handles on things such as gas pumps, shopping carts, and shopping baskets. If you have pin pads, touch screens, as some restaurants do for ordering, playing games, calling a server or paying a bill, or perhaps you have an ATM in/near your place of business, disinfect the screen(s). Sanitize cash registers, office phones and objects in common areas or used by multiple employees or customers.

Some items can't be cleaned. For example in restaurants, consider the removal of items that are frequently handled by multiple users such as self-service, exposed, disposable, and reusable utensils, bulk containers or individual condiments, plasticware, tongs, cups, covers, and lids. If self-service items cannot be removed, use individually dispensed utensil equipment and routinely clean and disinfect to reduce the risk.

## Waiting Rooms

Many of our small businesses such as dentists, physical therapists, insurance agents, barbershops and beauty salons and auto repair facilities have waiting areas. Many in the healthcare or foodservice business have practices to help prevent them from infecting their customers or getting infected by their customers. What they may not have are practices to prevent their customers from infecting each other. Frequently clean and disinfect surfaces used by customers in the waiting area such as tables, chairs, booths, and counters. Remove magazines because their surfaces are hard to clean and retain viruses when

touched or contaminated.

## Cancelation Fees

Some professional services such as spas, hair and nail salons may have cancelation fees for those who cancel on short notice. Consider waiving those if the cancelation is because the customer is not feeling well. The last thing you want is a sick customer in your salon because they don't want to pay the cancelation fee.

## Have Hand Sanitizer Available Throughout your Place of Business

Ask customers if they wouldn't mind sanitizing their hands when they enter your place of business. If you can't find hand sanitizer, you can make your own. (See below)

### How to make hand sanitizer: Ingredients you'll need

- 2/3 cup 99% rubbing (isopropyl) alcohol (You can get rubbing alcohol at the local corner store, drug store or dollar store)
- 1/3 cup 100% pure aloe vera gel (See above)
- *Optional:* 8-10 drops essential oil for smell) Check with local vendors and home-based businesses.
- Bowl and spoon
- Funnel
- Empty liquid soap or hand sanitizer bottle
- *Optional:* Gloves

### How to make hand sanitizer in two steps:

**Step 1:** Mix the rubbing alcohol, aloe vera and optional essential oil in a bowl with a spoon. Be careful to keep pure alcohol away from your skin.

**Step 2:** Funnel the mixture into the empty bottle. Screw the pump cap back on and voila, you have hand sanitizer.

### Making hand sanitizer at home: **Warnings**

As easy as it is to make your own hand sanitizer, you should be aware that rubbing alcohol in high quantities can damage your skin. Make sure you stick to the 2:1 proportion to keep the alcohol content around 60%. You can also use gloves while mixing and follow up sanitization with hand moisturizer. And we hope it goes without saying that hand sanitizer alone isn't going to protect you from getting sick. Wash your hands with soap and water when it's available, and limit how much you touch your face.

If you don't get the concentration right, [experts warn](#) that you'll end up with something that [isn't effective](#) or is [too harsh](#), and is a waste of ingredients. The key is to get the right ratio of ingredients. The CDC Control recommends using a hand sanitizer that contains at least [60% alcohol](#), which store-bought hand sanitizers have. If you don't use enough aloe gel, it will [dry out the skin on your hands](#), which can cause it to [crack or bleed](#) (the same is true if you just pour rubbing alcohol on your skin). But if you don't use enough alcohol, the final product won't be as effective at killing germs as store-bought hand sanitizer -- rendering it basically useless.



## Bathrooms

Make sure your soap and paper towel dispensers are refilled frequently and sanitized as well. Make sure you clean the faucets and fixtures touched by employees and customers. Encourage employees to use a tissue paper/napkin to open the door and not their freshly washed hands, to reduce the risk of spreading the disease.

## Handling Cash

Diseases and viruses such as COVID-19 can be transmitted through the handling of cash, credit or debit cards. Consider using gloves when handling cash or make sure you sanitize your hands after handling cash. Consider waiving the \$5 or \$10 minimum charge on credit and debit cards, getting a contactless debit or credit card reader and consider offering Apple Pay or Google Pay from smartphones. Avoid having customers cluster at the cash register while waiting to check out.

## Communicate With Your Customers

Inform your customers about the actions you are taking to keep them safe. If you have an email list, newsletter, social media accounts such as twitter, facebook or Instagram inform your customers about the actions you are taking to keep them safe.

*Here is an example from Chef Mike's restaurant Needham*

*Hello Friends!*

*To help combat the coronavirus here at Chef Mike's each and every person will be given a hand wipe when entering the restaurant.*

*My front desk staff will be wearing gloves when handling any monies and credit cards. My entire restaurant from floors to ceilings have been sanitized and will continue to be multiple times daily.*

*The safety of the general public must be and is always a first priority of any restaurant!*



If anyone has any questions please feel free to reach out to me directly [@gmail.com](mailto:@gmail.com)

Thank you!

Chef Mike

## Consider Providing Delivery Options

Foot traffic in your neighborhood and thus your store might decrease as people fear going out, or undergo self-quarantine. Seniors might be especially fearful of going out. Consider providing delivery options, and perhaps waving delivery fees or minimums for members of your community such as seniors and single parents. For some types of businesses such as food services, Uber Eats, Grubhub, Postmates and Doordash are options. For grocery items consider partnering with Instacart or PeaPod. In other cases make it easier to order by phone or online for pickup.



## In-Person Meetings

We have a lot of non-profits in the area that are critical to the wellbeing of the community. If you are considering holding a meeting, ask yourself, is this meeting really necessary? If the meeting is designed to get feedback from stakeholders or community residents, explore every other possible alternative to obtain feedback. We want to make sure people's voices are heard, but we want to also keep in mind the health and safety of our residents.

If you are holding a meeting as a way to "get the word out," consider holding virtual meetings with a service such as Zoom or Skype or teleconference service. Consider livestreaming your presentation. When meetings are held, we often want to hold them in the smallest space possible as a way to reduce cost and/or to make the turnout look larger. However, consider holding meetings in larger rooms where people aren't so close to each other and a minimum distance of six (6) feet is maintained between individuals. The same principles apply to restaurants. It's common practice to close off sections to get

everyone in one small area. Considering keep the other sections open as a way to keep customers spread out.

## Employees

If an employee needs to stay home because they are sick, or they need to take care of a sick family member e.g. child, or senior, find a way to support them and to provide coverage. It may slow your customer service, but that is not as bad as potentially infecting you, your customers, or members of your team. If you require an employee to provide a doctor's note if they are sick, consider waving that requirement. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain **confidentiality** as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Tell employees and model the proper way to cover a cough or sneeze, with your elbow, not your hand. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Because of the mild winter, spring is blooming early and with that comes allergies. Encourage your employees to take seasonal allergy medication so they can be relieved of hay fever symptoms including itchy and watery eyes, sneezing, nasal congestion, coughs and scratchy throats. As these are symptoms that might frighten customers. Skip hugs, kisses and handshakes with customers and fellow employees. Try elbow bumps, air kisses, and other creative gestures. Remind employees to wash their hands before they do a range of things such as stocking shelves.

## Voluntary or Mandatory Closures

With a decrease in foot traffic, you may have to decrease the days or hours you are open or you may even have to close. You need to talk to your landlord now to discuss what to do in worse case situations. The governor's declaration of a state of emergency allows a 'cordon sanitaire' to be set up if needed. Meaning, "a guarded line preventing anyone from leaving an area infected by a disease and thus spreading it." The mayor and/or Governor may urge all non-essential businesses to close.

## Trust Official Sources

During this time you will read stories on your social media channels, such as facebook, twitter and Instagram that contain misinformation are scams or false rumors. One current such rumor is people from certain ethnic groups, cultures or countries can't get the Coronavirus, which isn't true. Check all information from:

The Official City of Boston information page where the Boston Health Commission is keeping the most current information and recommendations available to the public.

<https://www.boston.gov/news/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-boston>

The Massachusetts government info page is at:

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention fact page is at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts.html>

Harvard Medical School resource page:

<https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/coronavirus-resource-center>

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## Resources

The Center for Disease Control Provides this:

Resources for [Businesses](#) and Employers

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>

**Boston Public Health Commission**

Is a good source for current information and provides this useful guidance.

[Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for COVID-19](#)

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*A special thanks to Jenn Cartee and Giavanna Gaskin.*

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