

## COVID-19 – Recommendations for Food Services

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important to follow INSPQ directives in order to prevent contamination. The following procedures will help you apply these directives. ASSTSAS is not the issuing body, we have simply translated the directives into work procedures for food services, and especially **dishwashing departments**. Our recommendations come from the reading we have done up to April 13, 2020 and may change going forward.

### Context and transmission

Scientific data indicate that most cases of COVID-19 are linked to person-to-person transmission in a situation of close contact without protection, with a person who has respiratory symptoms.

While SARS-CoV-2 is present in bodily fluids such as saliva, the percentage of transmissions through contact with contaminated surfaces (e.g. food, dishes, cutlery, trays) has not been established.

### INSPQ and MAPAQ measures

As stated in the INSPQ reference documents, safety measures to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace and in acute care facilities will be adapted to reflect the epidemiological situation in each region. To protect the health of employees and anyone who comes into the workplace, employers and workers are asked to follow the directives.

The INSPQ recommendations are not specific to food services in care settings, but principles such as social distancing and physical separation should be followed and tailored to each facility, taking into account space, equipment, work organization, etc. The best explanation of the general measures that should be implemented in all food services in hospitals and long-term care facilities (CHSLD, RPA) is in the document *Mesures de prévention en milieu de travail : recommandations intérimaires*. We recommend that you read it.

- INSPQ. (April 6, 2020). COVID-19 : Mesures de prévention en milieu de travail : recommandations intérimaires.  
<https://www.inspq.gc.ca/publications/2911-mesures-milieu-travail-covid19>

You may wish to consult the following sources of information as well:

- INSPQ. (April 10, 2020). COVID-19 : Mesures de prévention et de contrôle des infections pour les milieux de soins aigus : recommandation intérimaires.  
<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/publications/2906-pci-soins-aigus-covid19>
- INSPQ. (March 30, 2020). COVID-19 : Mesures pour l'industrie de la transformation.  
<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/publications/2952-transformation-alimentaire-covid19>
- INSPQ. (April 15, 2020). COVID-19: Interim Recommendations for Hotel Workers.  
<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/publications/2930-hotel-workers-covid19>
- MAPAQ. (2012). Aide-mémoire pour les exploitants d'établissements de restauration et de vente au détail.  
[https://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Publications/Aide-memoire\\_Exploitants\\_Restauration.pdf](https://www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Publications/Aide-memoire_Exploitants_Restauration.pdf)
- ASSTSAS. Coronavirus COVID-19-BIO page.  
<https://asstsas.qc.ca/dossiers-thematiques/coronavirus-2019-ncov-bio>

## **Measures for the Food Service department as a whole**

- If no specific directives have been issued by IPC (infection prevention and control), make every effort to apply the INSPQ recommendations in the above documents, which cover:
  - Physical distancing measures
  - Environmental hygiene measures
  - Workplace exclusions
  - Lunches and breaks
- In addition, apply all MAPAQ rules regarding:
  - Separating dirty and clean areas
  - Washing hands and forearms before and after performing tasks
  - Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces

## **Specific measures for the Dishwashing department**

The recommendation is that dishes and food not be shared, so additional precautions should be taken when retrieving and washing dirty dishes and cutlery.

- Make sure that basic practices are followed, including:
  - Allocate one pair of reusable gloves per person. Disposable gloves are permitted. Reusable gloves must be cleaned in accordance with the facility's procedures. Wash hands and forearms after removing any gloves.
  - Do not assign the same person to dirty dishes and clean dishes in the same cycle. When that is not possible, the employee must, before moving on to clean dishes, remove their gloves and apron, wash their hands and put on a new pair of gloves.
  
- Apply measures to reduce splashing, such as:
  - When throwing out leftover food, be careful to avoid splashes. Close trash bins and empty them as soon as possible (e.g. after the washing is done).
  - Don't rinse dirty dishes by spraying water on them. Soak dishes that require it in soap and water.
  - Don't clean the carts used to return dirty dishes by spraying water on them. Instead, wash them with a cloth soaked with a disinfecting solution.
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces and spaces, being careful to minimize splashes.
  - If there is still a risk of splashing with some activities despite the measures put in place, a face mask may be required.
  
- Assess the need to set up alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations near work areas.
- Prepare a contingency plan in the event that further directives are issued to augment safety measures.

## **Exceptional measures**

If the situation requires increased preventive measures because a significant number of users are infected or there is an outbreak, you may need to consider the following:

- Identifying the trays used by those who have confirmed COVID-19 infections, so that extra care can be taken when handling such users' dishes.
- Providing closed carts for returning such trays to the dishwashing department. Wash hands and forearms after returning the trays to the food service. Disinfect these carts with a cloth

for that purpose, soaked with a disinfecting solution, in accordance with the facility's procedure.

- Clean the COVID-19 identified dishes separately (e.g. at the end of the cycle)
- Use disposable dishes (even though this is not required by the INSPQ (April 10, 2020)). Note, however, that cutlery and dishes must still be handled to be thrown away and the tray must be disinfected.
- Stop using grinders or devices with worm screws. Place waste directly into garbage bins to minimize contamination of surfaces and mixing of foods.
- Re-evaluate the type of personal protective equipment (PPE) provided.