

Food Hygiene and Safety guidelines for Food Businesses during Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic



1. Introduction

1.1 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by SARS-COV-2 virus is latest threat whose clinical and epidemiological characteristics are still being documented. The disease is spreading rapidly and the number of cases is rising in most of the countries and in India as well. The disease can manifest as mild flu like symptoms and in some cases even as gastrointestinal symptoms. The respiratory diseases in severe form can manifest as acute respiratory illness and pneumonia. As evident COVID-19 seems to spread:

- **Directly** as human to human transmission, through spread of droplets of the infected person by sneezing or coughing; through close personal contact with infected person (including touching and shaking hands); or through touching nose, mouth or eyes with contaminated hands.
- **Indirectly** through touching contaminated surfaces.

1.2 The potential for food borne transmission is a concern with every new emerging infection. However, there are no reports or any evidence of faecal-oral transmission of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and no reported case of the disease has been linked to transmission through food. In case of COVID-19, the main risk involved is human to human transmission during food handling, from close contact with food handler or customer.

1.3 Current evidence on other coronavirus strains shows that while coronavirus appear to be stable at low and freezing temperatures on food surfaces for a certain period, however food hygiene and good food safety practices can prevent their transmission through food. The best practise for food business operators and consumers is to maintain highest standards of personal hygiene, the standard protocol of social distancing and limiting social contact, and detecting /isolating the infected persons from food handling operations. World Health Organisations (WHO) has advised social distancing and maintaining high personal hygiene standards as a means of containing and stopping transmission of this virus. Use of AarogyaSetu application may also help in containing the virus.

1.4 It is mandatory for all the food businesses to implement General Hygiene Practices (GHPs) specified in Schedule 4 of Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulation, 2011 to ensure food safety and hygiene in food establishments. Under the present circumstances of COVID-19 pandemic, there is an urgent requirement for food industry to ensure compliance with measures to protect food handlers from contracting COVID-19, to prevent exposure to or transmission of the virus, and to strengthen the food hygiene and sanitation practices.

1.5 This document provides guidance to food businesses, including their personnel involved in handling of food and other employees to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the work environment and any incidental contamination of food/food packages. These practices should be adopted in conjugation with Schedule 4 requirements.

2. Responsibility of Food Business Operator/Manager

In general Food businesses should follow the latest guidelines and SOP issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (GoI) on preventive measures to contain spread of COVID-19.

Specifically, Food business owner/ Manager shall ensure that:

2.1 Apart from GHPs laid in Schedule 4 of Food Safety and Standards (Licensing and Registration of Food Businesses) Regulation, 2011, food handlers/workers should be made aware about COVID-19 symptoms so that they are able to recognize the symptoms early and seek appropriate medical care and testing, and thereby minimising the risk of infecting fellow workers. They should be provided with training on risk factors, safe food handling, social distancing and other protective behaviours (e.g., cough etiquette and wearing of face masks/face covers, hand washing with soap or using of alcohol based hand rubs) required amid COVID-19 infections.

2.2 Employers should have a COVID-19 Screening Protocol in place to screen all personnel entering the premise. All employees/workers/visitors should be screened at entry point for the symptoms of COVID-19 such as temperature (using non-contact type thermometer), cough, cold, etc. Those with temperature more than $37.5^{\circ}C$ ($99.5^{\circ}F$) and/or flu like symptoms shall not be allowed to enter the establishment.

Note: Some common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever (high temperature – $37.5^{\circ}C$ or $99.5^{\circ}F$)
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Breathing difficulties
- Fatigue

2.3 Entrance of food establishment should have mandatory hand hygiene (sanitiser dispenser) for employees/ customers/visitors.

2.4 Employees/food handlers/visitors should be encouraged to self-declare and inform about any signs/symptoms of respiratory illness before visit to the premises. Or during working there. Such declaration is expected to be forthcoming with the assurance of assistance and pay/job protection especially in the low income group of employees. In some cases, infected people may be asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic and may not display any signs or symptoms of disease or may have mild symptoms that can be easily overlooked. The employers, therefore, should ensure the availability of masks and protective gear to all food handlers. In case a food handler is COVID-19 infected or is identified at the premises, he/she should be instructed to remain in home quarantine for specified time period and not return to work until free from infection.

2.5 Regular monitoring of the employees/ food handlers is essential for prevention of COVID-19 spread within the food establishment. The employees/ food handlers should also self-monitor and report any symptoms to the employers. Wearing masks/face covers and protective gears at all times should be ensured. The employer must provision and issue protective gears to

employees at all times. The employee should maintain at least two meters of distance from each other and practice social distancing in the workplace.

- 2.6 Employers should be aware and sensitive of workers' concerns about salary, leave salary, health and other issues that may arise during the outbreak.
- 2.7 Posters/standees/Audio Visuals (AVs) on preventive measures for COVID-19 should be displayed in the food establishments for awareness of employees/visitors/customers.
- 2.8 An in-house emergency response team should be established in large food businesses to effectively deal with suspected COVID-19 infections and one person should be designated as the COVID-19 co-ordinator. Their contact details should be shared with all employees. The team should have detailed protocols on the steps to be taken when handling suspected/positive COVID-19 cases. Further, as a means of general preparedness, the following should be ensured:
 - 2.6.1 List of local authorized hospitals for COVID-19 testing and treatment is regularly updated;
 - 2.6.2 Contact details of the professional disinfection company are kept handy;
 - 2.6.3 Adequate disinfectant for emergency use are available;
 - 2.6.4 Dedicated face masks/facecovers, gloves, safety glasses, protection suits for emergency use (personal protective equipment or PPE) are procured and stored as per government advisories, from time to time;
 - 2.6.5 Isolation rooms (one for suspected cases, one for close contacts) are prepared with special trash bins;
 - 2.6.6 A process for record keeping is established wherein all the related information - attendance, health status of employees, visitor details - are maintained. Process for record keeping shall be developed for suspected/ confirmed cases and should be recorded, including, but not limited to employee name, the whole process of the incident, conversations with local authorities, actions taken by the company.
- 2.9 **Air conditioning/Ventilation:** Food business should ensure that the guidelines of CPWD are followed which *inter alia* emphasises that the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30°C, relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70%, intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be adequate.

3. Personal Hygiene of Food Handlers

- 3.1 Food Business shall ensure that their hygiene standards are in line with established Food Safety Management Systems (FSMS) and these practices include:
 - **Proper hand hygiene** – washing with soap and water for at least 40-60 seconds (follow WHO advise)
 - **Frequent use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser**

- **Good respiratory hygiene** (cover mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing dispose of tissues and wash hands)
- **Frequent cleaning/disinfection** of work surfaces and touch points such as door handles
- **Avoiding close contact with** anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

3.2 **Proper hand hygiene** protocols should be strictly followed. Employee/ food handlers shall thoroughly wash and sanitize hands and change into clean uniform before entering the food premise. Hands should be washed for at least 40 to 60 seconds using water (preferably hot water) and soap. Hands should be dried with clean towel or air dryers. It is ideal to use food operated or elbow press taps. In case of a manual tap, it should be sanitized after each use. Hands shall be washed:

- before starting work
- after coughing, sneezing or blowing nose
- before/after touching face or hair
- before handling cooked or ready-to-eat food
- after handling or preparing raw food
- after handling waste
- after cleaning duties
- after using the toilet
- after eating, drinking or smoking
- after handling money or paper (such as bill, indent, forms, etc.)
- after touching surfaces such as door knobs, walls, windows, doors, keyboards, steering wheel, etc.
- after removal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, face covers, etc.

3.3 This should preferably be followed with sanitising of hands for at least 20 seconds (with 70% alcohol based sanitiser or an equivalent). If soap and running water are not immediately available, provide alcohol based hand rubs containing 70% alcohol.

3.4 Spitting should be prohibited in all areas.

3.5 Employees/food handlers shall wear reusable face covers/ masks and clean protective clothing like full sleeves clothes/aprons, head gears, caps gloves at all the time while in the production area. The face cover shall fit perfectly on face without leaving any gaps on mouth, nose and chin. The face covers/ masks should be changed every six hours or as soon as they get wet. Reusable face covers shall be cleaned and sanitized thoroughly. In case disposable face masks are used or reusable face cover is damaged or changes shape, it shall be disposed of in a closed bin. While removing face cover/mask, care shall be taken not to touch outer surface of the face cover. Employees shall avoid touching their face, eyes, nose, etc. after removal of face cover before washing their hands.

(Note: Staff should wash/disinfect hands after removing their regular clothes and before touching their clean uniforms to avoid contamination of clean clothes).

- 3.6 Employees shall preferably not use personal jewellery, watches etc. Instruments like mobiles should be discouraged while at work place or should be frequently sanitised.
- 3.7 **Gloves** shall be worn while handling prepared food or ready to eat food. During this time no other surface, equipment, utensils should be touched or no non-food related activities such as emptying bin, closing doors/windows, touching mobile phones, handling currency etc. should be carried out. Otherwise, the gloves shall be changed and suitably disposed-off. Hands must be washed between gloves change and when they are removed. Wearing gloves may give a false sense of security and may result in staff not washing hands as frequently as required. Wearing of gloves worn for a prolonged period usually leads to sweating and bacterial growth on hands. Therefore, gloves shall be changed frequently. Employees shall be trained on the correct method of using gloves and wearing gloves shall not be considered as a substitute for hand washing.
- 3.8 **Respiratory hygiene** is important to prevent COVID-19 spread at a workplace. Employees shall cover their mouth and nose with tissue while coughing or sneezing. The tissue shall be disposed in a closed bin and hands shall be thoroughly washed and sanitised, before handling food again.
- 3.9 Use of fingerprint or biometric attendance shall be discontinued during the epidemic/pandemic period in order to minimise cross infection through this common contact point and may be replaced with facial recognition or manual system ensuring minimal physical contact. Using each other's phones, belongings, sharing of common stationery like pens, or other work tools and equipment, should be discouraged.
- 3.10 **Disposal of PPE:** Generally, masks and gloves and any other form of PPE should be disposed in closed separate waste bin or in paper bags sealed with due declaration after use. The final disposal shall be as per the instructions provided by the manufacturer of PPE.

(Note: Instructions should be displayed for correct technique for removal of PPE. The waste bin dedicated for disposal of PPE should be clearly marked. Employees shall be instructed to wash hands with soap and water or sanitise hands using 70% alcohol based sanitiser for at least 20 seconds after disposal of PPE).

4. Practice Social Distancing

- 4.1 Social distancing aims, through a variety of means, to minimise physical contact between individuals and thereby to reduce the possibility of person to person transmission of the disease. A minimum distance of two meters shall be maintained between two persons at all points in a food establishment.
- 4.2 To implement social distancing, food businesses shall:

- 4.2.1 limit the number of people on a production floor or a kitchen or a shop or by creating physical barriers so that people in smaller spaces also get protected without hindering work, wherever possible.
- 4.2.2 use spacing measures (e.g. floor markers, stickers) at tills or queues, space out/stagger workstations/food preparation areas, seating areas and reducing the speed of production lines to ensure two meters gap between food handlers.
- 4.2.3 modify if feasible, workstations along the processing line so that workers are separated at least by two meters in all directions. Ideally modification should be such that workers do not face one another.
- 4.2.4 use physical barriers, such as strip curtains, plexi glass or similar material or other impermeable dividers or partitions in the processing lines.
- 4.2.5 review the shift arrangement and social interaction of the staff. Increase time in between shifts/scatter break periods to minimize staff interaction. This will also help in ensuring more time for cleaning and sanitation.
- 4.2.6 prohibit sharing of lockers by employees and ensure a gap of two meters is maintained by employees while using the lockers.
- 4.2.7 In case of food deliveries, prefer leaving food packets outside the door or maintain a gap of two meters from the customer.
- 4.2.8 encourage takeaways and food deliveries instead of dine-in options. To avoid crowding at a place, a ticketing system can also be adopted.
- 4.2.9 If possible, arrange separate entry and exit points for employees /visitors/customers.
- 4.2.10 Face-to-face meetings should be restricted as much as possible. The management should identify roles or areas within a business which may be managed through work from home or by remotely working remotely away from other staff.
- 4.2.11 Avoid crowding of staff in parking areas or any other common utility areas. It may be advisable to restrict to any unavoidable congregation to not more than 5 persons with appropriate social distancing measures.

5. Cleaning and Sanitation

- 5.1 Food premise shall be always well maintained and cleaned thoroughly and sanitized daily. Cleaning and sanitation requirements mentioned in Schedule 4 shall be strictly followed.
- 5.2 Various areas of **Food Establishment** (such as food preparation/ production area, stores, packaging area, service area, waste disposal area, etc.), office space, transport vehicle shall be cleaned with soap and water, followed by disinfection (using quaternary ammonium compounds like benzalkonium chloride (BKC), freshly prepared 0.5 percent hypochlorite solution (free chlorine) or any other disinfectants found to be effective against corona virus.
- 5.3 Equipment, containers, utensils, cutlery, etc. should be cleaned thoroughly with detergent and water. It is preferred to use hot water (above 60°C) for washing and sanitising.
- 5.4 **High touch points** (such as elevator buttons, handrails / handles and call buttons, escalator handrails, public counters, intercom systems, equipment like telephone, printers/scanners, and other office machines, table tops, chair handles, pens, diary files, keyboards, mouse, mouse pad,

tea/coffee dispensing machines, etc.) shall be cleaned twice daily by mopping with a linen/absorbable cloth soaked in quaternary ammonium compounds or freshly prepared 0.5 per cent hypochlorite solution (free chlorine) or any other disinfectant found to be effective against corona virus. In case of metallic surfaces like door handles, security locks, handles of baskets/carts, display racks where use of bleach is not suitable, 70 percent alcohol shall be used to wipe the surfaces. Hand sanitizing stations should be installed in food establishments (especially at the entry) and near high contact surfaces.

- 5.5 **Toilets and Washrooms** shall be cleaned after every shift using water and detergent. This shall be followed with disinfection using freshly prepared 0.5 per cent hypochlorite solution (free chlorine) or any other disinfectant found to be effective against corona virus. For metallic surfaces (such as shower, taps, etc.) and surfaces where use of bleach is not suitable, use 70 percent alcohol based disinfectant.
- 5.6 All cleaning equipment, cloth, mops, reusable protective gear such as boots, gloves etc. shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after every use and prior to use in other areas.
- 5.7 Cleaning process should be followed by disinfection. The common disinfectants that may be used are:

Active Ingredient	Conc./ Dilution	Contact Time	Suitable For	Frequency
Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (QACs) such as Benzalkonium chloride (BKC), Quaternary Methyl Butyric Acid (QMBA) etc.	-	5 – 10 Min	Food Contact Surfaces	After use
			Common touch points	Every two hours
			Food premise	Every four hours
Peracetic or Peroxyacetic acid	500–2000 mg/L	10 minutes or as per labelling	Food Contact Surfaces,	After use or as and when required
			Common touch points	Every two hours
			Food premise	Every four hours
Sodium Hypochlorite	5000 ppm (i.e. 0.5%) free chlorine	10 Min	Food Contact Surfaces,	After use or as and when required
			Common touch points	Every two hours
			Food premise	Every four hours
Isopropanol	70%	2 Min	Food Contact Surfaces,	After use or as and when required
		2 min	Common touch surfaces,	Every two hours
		30 sec	Hand Sanitation	As an when required
Ethanol	70%	2 Min	Food Contact	After use or as and

			Surfaces,	when required
		2 min	Common touch surfaces,	Every two hours
		30 sec	Hand Sanitation	As an when required
<p>Note: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning process should be followed by disinfection. • Use chemicals as per the direction provided by the manufacturers. <p>There are more chemical based disinfectants available; this is just a suggestive list.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Refer to Annexure</i></p>				

6. Special Instructions for different food sectors

6.1 Food Service/Delivery/Takeaways

- 6.1.1 Food service area shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after every meal prepared. Surfaces repeatedly touched by employees or customers such as door knobs, equipment handles, check-out counters, and grocery cart handles, etc. shall be disinfected frequently.
- 6.1.2 Hand wash facility should be made available to the workers and if that is not possible hand sanitisers should be placed at the entry of the service area/ billing counter and used accordingly.
- 6.1.3 It is preferred to order raw material, packaging material, etc in advance (at least 48-72 hrs). This will provide time to keep products in isolation and avoid possibility of COVID-19 contamination from surface of the food packets.
- 6.1.4 Even with proper hand washing, food workers should use a barrier such as tongs, gloves, or other utensil to prevent direct hand contact with food.
- 6.1.5 No ready-to-eat food item shall be left open and shall be kept covered or in glass displays. Use gloves to avoid direct contact of bare hands with ready-to-eat foods.
- 6.1.6 There should be visible notices pasted, for staff promoting hand hygiene and physical distancing.
- 6.1.7 Employees shall wear clean uniform, mask/face cover, gloves (if necessary) and head covers at all times. Pre-screening of the workers for COVID-19 symptoms should be strictly followed. Individuals showcasing COVID-19 symptoms should be sent to the health facility for further evaluation and encouraged to stay home.
- 6.1.8 All food items shall be thoroughly washed. Fruits and vegetables (to be consumed raw) shall be washed in 50 ppm chlorine (or equivalent solution) and potable water before storage.
- 6.1.9 Prepare food for limited customers to avoid food waste and operationalize take-out and delivery options.

- 6.1.10 Help customers to maintain social distancing by way of encouraging spacing between the customers while in line for service or check out, in accordance with the established social distancing norm (minimum two meters gap). Establish designated pick-up zones for customers to help social distancing. Waiting area should have designated circles or stickers for ensuring social distancing while waiting.
- 6.1.11 Customers shall be encouraged to place orders online or on telephone, well in advance. This will help in reducing the wait time at the food establishment. In case of dine-in, used of technology based applications for food ordering at the table should be encouraged.
- 6.1.12 Buffet system, food service and mass gathering shall be avoided during COVID-19 pandemic; such services shall be resumed only under directions of concerned State Authorities. In case such services are resumed, food establishment shall ensure, in addition to directive of State in this regard, that:
- *Dedicated food handler(s) should serve food items to customers instead of multiple customers on their own using serving spoons.*
 - *Minimum two meters gap is maintained between the food handler and customer.*
 - *Minimum two meters gap is maintained between the seating space and tables in the service area.*
 - *Not more than 50 per cent of the seating capacity is occupied at any given time.*
 - *High touch points such as countertops, tongs, ladles, handles, etc. should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.*
- 6.1.13 In case of food delivery, food handler shall ensure that:
- Face is covered with a clean mask or a face cover hands are sanitised before food pick up and after delivery. Sanitiser is carried by delivery personnel at all times.
 - If gloves are worn by delivery personnel, then they are removed and disposed properly and hand shall be thoroughly washed with soap and water for at least 40-60 seconds or sanitised with 70 per cent alcohol for at least 20 seconds after removal of gloves.
 - Social distancing is followed by maintaining a minimum two meters gap between self and customer.
 - Contact with common touch points such as door bell, handles, etc. should be avoided. If unavoidable, hands are to be sanitised after coming in contact with common touch points.
 - Food delivery bag should be disinfected after each delivery cycle.
 - Contactless delivery methods shall be encouraged.
- 6.1.14 Employees shall refrain from handling cash. In case cash is handled, employees shall wash their hands afterwards. Customers shall be encouraged to use contactless modes of payments such as UPI, QR codes, net-banking, e-wallets, etc. In case credit/debit cards are used, the card machine shall be sanitised with 70 % alcohol after each use.

- 6.1.15 If possible, food businesses shall provide disposable menu card, utensils, cutlery and single use sachet (of salt pepper, sugar, ketchup, etc) instead of reusable utensils, cutlery, bottles or salt shakers. Else the same should be frequently cleaned, after each use.

6.2 Food Retail

- 6.2.1 All employees shall wear clean clothes/uniforms, headgear/cap, face masks or covers and gloves at all times.
- 6.2.2 Food business shall regulate the number of customers entering retail stores at one point of time and avoid overcrowding. Hand sanitization should be provided at the points of entry and exit of a premise to all.
- 6.2.3 Pre-screening of the employees/workers and customers should be done before start of work/entry and individuals having COVID-19 symptoms should be prevented from entering the premises.
- 6.2.4 Social distancing should be followed by staff and customers. Floor markings, stickers, etc. should be used to maintain the required gap between customers, while they wait for their turn to enter the shop or for billing. Make regular announcements to remind customers about social distancing. Plexi-glass barriers at tills and counters may be used as an additional level of protection for staff.
- 6.2.5 Reduce stock quantity on display and create a gap between two products displayed. This will help in maintaining social distancing while shopping.
- 6.2.6 Common touch points such as door handles, racks, billing counters, etc. should be cleaned and sanitized frequently. Handles of baskets/trolleys should be sanitized after every use.
- 6.2.7 In case of food delivery, food handler shall ensure that-
- Face is covered with a clean mask or a face cover and hands are sanitised before food pick up and after delivery. Sanitiser should be carried by delivery personnel at all times.
 - If disposable gloves are worn then gloves shall be removed after delivery and before entering the food premise. Hand shall be sanitised before entering the premise. New gloves shall be worn after each delivery.
 - Social distancing is followed by maintaining a minimum two meters gap between self and customer.
 - Contact with common touch points such as door bell, handles, etc. should be avoided. If unavoidable, hands should be sanitised after coming in contact with common touch points.
 - Food delivery carts should be disinfected after each use.
 - Contactless delivery shall be encouraged.

- 6.2.8 Employees shall refrain from handling cash. In case cash is handled, employees shall wash their hands afterwards. Customers shall be encouraged to use contactless modes of payments such as UPI, QR codes, e-wallets, etc. In case credit/debit cards are used, the card machine shall be sanitised with 70 percent alcohol after each use.

6.3 Food Transportation or distribution

- 6.3.1 Drivers, loaders and other support staff shall be made aware about COVID-19 infection symptoms and its prevention by following high standards of hygiene, cleaning and sanitation and following social distancing.
- 6.3.2 Delivery/transport vehicles shall be cleaned and sanitized (and if possible, disinfected) regularly. Such vehicles should only be used for food deliveries/distribution. Cleaning and sanitation records should be available in the vehicle at all times.
- 6.3.3 Drivers, loaders and other support staff displaying flu like or COVID-19 symptoms shall refrain from handling/transporting/delivering food.
- 6.3.4 Drivers, loaders and other support staff shall maintain high standards of personal hygiene. They shall be provided with an alcohol-based hand sanitise, which may be fixed in the driver's cabin. Face covers shall be worn at all times.
- 6.3.5 Drivers, loaders and other support staff should avoid using public toilets as much as possible.
- 6.3.6 Drivers and other staff delivering to food premises should not leave their vehicles during delivery (if possible), and shall refrain from stopping in between for tea breaks, etc.
- 6.3.7 If a vehicle enters an area marked as a COVID-19 hotspot for deliveries/ pickups, then the vehicle shall be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before use.

7. Food Packaging

- 7.1 Corona virus is known to survive on surfaces of various materials. Food businesses shall ensure that food handlers involved in food packaging should maintain a high level of personal hygiene, social distancing and implement GHPs as per Schedule 4. All measures shall be adopted to ensure that food packaging is kept clean and away from sources of contamination.

(Note: SARS-COV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 disease has been found to survive on surface of packaging material for certain amount of time. Use of surface disinfection techniques such as use of UV or Ozone etc. suitable for the type of material being used is recommended. Proper procedure for use and prevention of exposure hazards shall be implemented.)

8. Guidelines for Customers

- 8.1 Food businesses should ensure that customers are informed about the steps to be followed by them within food business premises to prevent spread of COVID-19 disease.
- 8.2 Customers entering the food premise should be checked for COVID-19 symptoms. Those showcasing flu like or COVID-19 symptoms should be encouraged to order takeaways.
- 8.3 Consumers must follow the usual precautions of wearing mask/face covers when going out for buying any food, ordering food or taking deliveries. Frequent use of hand sanitiser is recommended.
- 8.4 All customers should maintain social distancing while waiting in queues, placing orders, paying bills. Minimum distance of two meters should be maintained at all times. Sharing of food and drinks should be discouraged.
- 8.5 Customers shall be advised to only touch the products that they intend to purchase. Contact/ touching of other food products, area and surface should be avoided.

9. Guidelines for management of food establishment on identification of COVID-19 positive case

- 9.1 Food production facilities, distributors, retailers and wholesalers are part of our nation's "**critical infrastructure**" and must remain operational to feed the country. Inconsistent approaches while reacting to an incident of an individual, particularly manufacturing personnel, testing positive for COVID-19, have the potential to jeopardize our food system. The food business should have in place a detailed emergency plan for handling the COVID-19 suspect/positive case at the premise.
- 9.2 The key recommendations for in-house emergency response team while dealing with employees in light of the COVID-19 pandemic include:
 - 9.2.1 In case any employee **has symptoms suggestive of COVID-19** (i.e., fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath) onsite at the facility, he shall be immediately isolated in a designated isolation area and advised home quarantine. Immediate medical consultation should be taken from nearest designated medical facility (hospital/clinic) or state/district helpline. Mild or moderate cases on assessment by health authorities should be advised home quarantine. The guidelines issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for managing COVID-19 suspect/positive case shall be followed.
 - 9.2.2 The In-house emergency response team shall identify and isolate and advised home quarantine all **employees/food handlers who came into close contact** (within one meter) with the COVID-19 suspect/positive case. The list of all these contacts should be shared with nearest designated medical facility (hospital/clinic) or state/ district helpline and guidelines issued by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (GoI) in this regard shall be followed.

9.2.3 **Reporting of illness:** If a food handler develops any symptom of COVID-19 infection (dry cough, trouble in breathing, high fever and chills) while at home, he/she should not report to work but inform of such illness to employer on phone or email.

9.3.1 Guidelines for cleaning and disinfection of premise accessed by COVID-19 positive person

9.3.2 In a situation where a COVID-19 positive case is detected in a facility during working, it is recommended to immediately perform cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces likely to be accessed by the said worker. All the areas/sections, machines, equipment, etc. accessed by the COVID-19 positive employee shall be identified and immediately closed for others. This area should be opened next day or later, only after cleaning and disinfection process has been completed.

9.3.3 The exposed area/section, toilet, workstation, counters, lockers and equipment that came in contact with the infected person should be thoroughly cleaned with water and detergent and disinfected with quaternary ammonium compounds or 0.5% hypochlorite solution or equivalent. Metallic surfaces like door handles, machine parts, contact surface of product with machine etc., security locks, keys etc. shall be disinfected with 70 per cent alcohol solution.

9.3.4 The whole plant or premises may not be closed or disinfected. The areas where COVID-19 positive employee was known or is likely to have visited shall be disinfected as per the protocol. However, it is advised to demarcate all zones or areas which have had or likely to have an exposure to the COVID-19 suspect/positive case. Areas known confirmed not to have been exposed to COVID19 may remain operational. In no circumstance, area or equipment accessed by the COVID19 case should be kept operation without completing the cleaning and disinfection process.

9.3.5 All the waste that has been in contact with the COVID-19 infected patient such as used PPE, tissues, papers etc. shall be collected in separate bags and handed over to authorised waste collectors engaged by local bodies or Common Bio-medical Waste Treatment and Disposal Facility shall be contacted directly. Mask and other PPE used by person in quarantine shall be kept in a paper bag for a minimum of 72 hours prior for disposal as general waste.

9.3.6 Food business should also comply with any guidelines or recommendations issued by the State/UT or local health authority in this regard.

9.3.7 The above protocol is to be followed on detection of COVID-19 a positive case. The same is advised to be followed in case of any suspect case where the symptoms and history indicate COVID-19 infection. Precaution is better than failure to take measures in time.

(Note: In case the employee suspected of COVID-19 disease is tested negative, the food establishment can restore the work and reopen closed area(s) aborting their sanitization and disinfection process, though completion of the same is highly recommended. The isolated

contacts should be informed about the same. The employees sent in self-quarantine can be called back to re-join work).

10. Guidelines for Food Handled by COVID-19 suspect or positive employee

There is currently no evidence to support that the SARS-CoV-2 virus can be transmitted to humans through food or food packaging materials. However, this virus can survive on different surfaces for upto 72 hours. The following guidelines for treatment of foods handled by a COVID-19 positive food employee shall be implemented:

- Raw/cooked food preparation with shelf life less than 72 hours or intended for immediate consumption shall be discarded.
- Packaged food with shelf life more than 72 hours and not intended for immediate consumption should be stored separately for at least 72 hours

(Note: Since the information on the COVID-19 Pandemic is evolving continuously, these guidelines are based on the present information available about the pandemic and can be revised as and when any new information is available)

Annexure Guidelines for preparation of Disinfectants

1. Guidelines for preparation of Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (only indicative)

Active Ingredients	Percentage
Alkyl (C14 50%, C12 40%, C16 10%)Dimethyl Benzyl Ammonium Chloride	32.0%
Octyldecyl dimethyl ammonium chloride(C8/10)	24.0%
Diocetyl dimethyl ammonium chloride(C8/8)	9.6%
Didecyl dimethyl ammonium chloride(C10/10)	14.4%
Inert Ingredients	20.0%

Dilution:1:64000

2. Guidelines for Preparation of 0.5% sodium hypochlorite solution

Product	Available chlorine	Preparation of 0.5% solution
Sodium hypochlorite – liquid bleach	3.5%	1 part bleach to 5 parts water
Sodium hypochlorite – liquid	5.0%	1 part bleach to 8 parts water
NaDCC (sodium dichloro-isocyanurate) powder	60%	8.5 grams to 1 litre water
NaDCC (1.5 g/ tablet) – tablets	60%	5.5 tablets to 1 litre water
Chloramine – powder	25%	40 g to 1 litre water
Bleaching powder	70%	3.5 g to 1 litre water
Any other	As per manufacturer's Instructions	

Example of few other disinfectants

- Hydrogen peroxide (15% solution) solution: Prepare 2.5% w/v solution in water
- Peroxy acetic acid (5-15%) solution: May be used upto 200 ppm
- Quaternary ammonium compound (eg. Bac-cide): Dissolve 50 ml in 1 litre water

Note

- Use chemicals as per the direction provided by the manufacturers.
- There are more chemical based disinfectants available; this is just a suggestive list.