

Why is Breakroom Safety Important?

The risk for the spread of COVID-19 is always highest when someone is unmasked such as when eating or drinking.

- Workers want to relax and connect with coworkers during their breaks. This can result in them letting down their guard, especially while eating and drinking.
- Spread is more likely to occur between unmasked staff members breaking together than between residents and masked staff. It is important to move staff breaks into larger open areas when respiratory infection is active in the building.
- While unmasked, eating, drinking, talking, and laughing may increase the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses.
- Sharing common items such as coffee pots, microwaves, refrigerators, tables, and community snacks provides opportunities for contamination and germs to spread.



Reducing Break Room Infection Risks

Consider reducing the risk for staff-to-staff spread through break areas when community transmission is high, or if positive cases are present in the building.

Seek Alternative Break Spaces

- Assess all break rooms/spaces for safe capacity. Allow at least 6 feet of distance between staff during breaks. Consider ventilation when assessing the room.
- Consider eliminating breaks in smaller break rooms.
- Utilize larger open areas such as common areas or unused dining rooms. These spaces can provide for enhanced social distancing and protect staff from transmission while unmasked.
- Consider using outdoor spaces when weather permits.

Modify Break Areas

- If possible, provide for additional fresh air entry into the area by opening a window in the break area.
- Post breakroom capacity at the entry to each area. Reinforce capacity.
- Use visual signs and queues to remind about the importance of hand hygiene and PPE use, disinfection, and disposal.
- Remove seating to support capacity restrictions. Set up break room tables and chairs so that they are at least 6ft apart.
- Limit the number of unmasked staff members in break areas. During an outbreak, or when community transmission is high, consider limiting areas to one unmasked person in a break area actively eating or drinking.

Staffing Considerations

- Stagger breaks to help reduce break room congestion
- Encourage the use of personal vehicles and outdoor spaces, particularly in good weather

Manage Break Environments

- Place a separate table for decontamination of face shields. Ideally this should be placed six feet from eating and break areas.
 - Place instructions for face shield/goggle disinfection on or above the table.
 - Provide disinfectant, paper towels, trash bin, and hand sanitizer.
- Avoid having items for common use (such as eating utensils, food items, condiments) stored on tables where breaks are taken.
- Reusable dishware and utensils should be washed with soap and water, dried with clean paper towel, and stored after use.
- Personal drink containers should be labeled with staff name and kept protected from contamination by other unmasked staff members.
- Place a sign on each break table with instructions for PPE handling during meal that includes:
 - Place your disinfected face shield or goggles on a clean paper towel
 - Perform hand hygiene
 - Remove and discard your mask by only touching the loops or straps
 - Enjoy your break
 - At the end of your break clean and disinfect the table
 - Perform hand hygiene and don a clean mask

