



Arkansas Department of Health

4815 West Markham Street • Little Rock, Arkansas 72205-3867 • Telephone (501) 661-2000

Governor Asa Hutchinson

Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Secretary of Health

Effective date: May 11, 2020

Directive on Resuming Restaurant Dine-in Operations

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109--110. Based on available scientific evidence, it is necessary and appropriate to take further action to ensure that COVID-19 remains controlled and that residents and visitors in Arkansas remain safe.

On March 20, 2020, the Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, issued a directive that food establishment and restaurant dine-in operations in the state would cease. This directive provides guidance on resumption of dine in services of food establishments and restaurants through a phased approach.

Phase 1

- Dine-in service may resume; however, seating shall be limited up to 33% of total seating capacity. This includes indoor and outdoor dining areas.
- Seating shall be adjusted to maintain 10-foot physical distancing between tables so occupied seats are six feet from seats at adjacent tables.
- Reservations should be encouraged when practical. If reservations are not made, physical distancing must be maintained when customers are waiting to be seated.
- All staff who come in contact with patrons must wear a face mask that completely covers their nose and mouth. Staff in the back are encouraged to wear a face mask.
- Gloves used during food preparation should be worn in accordance with the Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments. Glove use by waitstaff and others who do not directly contact food with their hands is optional.
- Patrons must wear a face covering upon entrance and while in the restaurant until the food or drink is served.
- All staff shall be screened daily before entering the facility. Any employee with a cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath shall be immediately excluded from the facility.
- Signage must be placed at the front of restaurants to alert patrons not to enter the facility if they are sick or have symptoms such as cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath.

- Monitoring of frequent handwashing and no bare-hand contact of ready-to-eat foods by staff.
- Encourage customers to pre-order meals to reduce time spent in the facility. This includes for takeout services.
- Groups shall be limited, not to exceed 10 people.
- Restaurants are encouraged to have a senior hour to provide exclusive access to these high-risk individuals.
- Self-service operations, including, but not limited to, salad bars, buffets, and condiment bars shall remain closed for patron access.
- Facilities with any employee testing positive shall be reported to the Arkansas Department of Health immediately.
- Following each meal service, the tables, chairs, menus and any other frequently contacted surfaces including, but not limited to, condiment containers, napkin holders and salt/pepper shakers shall be cleaned and disinfected prior to seating the next customer.
 - Products with an EPA-approved emerging viral pathogen claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for these products. For a list of EPA-approved emerging pathogen sanitizers: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>. (Non-food contact surfaces may be sanitized with 1/2 cup of regular, unscented bleach per gallon of water followed by a 5-minute contact time.)
- Food contact surfaces shall be sanitized in accordance with §4-501.114 of the Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments.
- Single-Use items including, but not limited to, disposable silverware, condiment packets, and straws shall be removed from public access and provided only upon request.
- Bars and entertainment operations (such as live music, in-seat gaming devices, or arcades) within restaurants are prohibited. Normal service of alcohol within the restaurant seating area is allowed. This does not restrict the preparation of alcoholic beverages in the bar area.
- Restrooms and other high-touch areas shall be disinfected frequently based on customer volume.
- Service may be declined to patrons not wearing masks.

The above restrictions will be in place until the Secretary of Health determines epidemiological data are sufficient to proceed to Phase 2 and then Phase 3. The requirements for Phase 2 and 3 will supersede the above-mentioned requirements. Phase 2 will include less restrictive measures such as increasing the total available seating to 66% and opening bars and entertainment operations while maintaining 6 feet physical distance among patrons. Phase 3 will include returning to normal operations with full seating capacity.