

Risk of COVID-19 in a Restaurant or Bar Setting

The SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19, is spread primarily through respiratory droplets when individuals cough, talk loudly, sing or breathe heavily. The risk of transmission increases the longer an individual interacts with others and the closer they sit/stand together, especially if less than 6 feet or in an indoor area. Masks reduce transmission of COVID-19 when they are consistently used by customers and employees, especially when physically distanced. Good ventilation and hygiene and cleaning surfaces that you touch are also important in decreasing the risk of transmission.

Restaurants and bars are of particular risk primarily because interactions between people occur within 6 feet of others. The CDC released a study of 314 adults which found that individuals with COVID-19 were more likely to have eaten at a restaurant or been in a bar in the previous 2 weeks. In people without known COVID-19 contacts, the risk of catching COVID-19 doubled by visiting restaurants or bars if the majority of patrons were wearing masks and quadrupled if they were not.

A more recent analysis looked at which locations were associated with the highest number of infections. Overall, the top categories were full and limited services restaurants, fitness centers, cafes and bars, hotels and motels, and religious organizations.