

Hygiene & Reusables

Hygiene and safety is something extremely important for food and drink businesses. The last year many businesses have stopped accepting reusable items and been using more disposables because of hygiene worries.

But do reusable items pose a hygiene risk?

Single-Use Items aren't safer than Reusables

Studies by more than 125 virologists from 18 countries* have shown that disposable items aren't any safer than reusable items.

Covid-19 is spread through close contact with other people via airborne droplets. These tiny, virus-carrying particles exit people's mouths when they cough, sneeze, or talk.

Single-use is not inherently safer than reusables, and causes additional public health concerns once it is discarded. Reusable items are also more easily cleaned to make sure items are hygienic.

[* Health Expert Statement Addressing Safety of Reusables and COVID-19](#)



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But are reusable items safe to accept?

Reusable items can be used safely by employing basic hygiene. Below are some tips on how to accept reusables safely.



1. Continue to follow hygiene standards

Following hygiene standards and taking extra precautions are effective at minimising risk to staff and customers.

Steps such as cleaning surfaces and objects, washing dishes and utensils, and encouraging hand washing are common place but many businesses have taken additional measures due to Covid-19. For guidance on hygiene standards see our links below.

2. Put in place contact-free systems

It may seem a bit strange to serve customers without needing to touch the reusable item they bring in, but there are systems you can use to minimise contact and risk for your staff and customers.

Watch [this video](#) from City to Sea to see how you can accept reusable cups contact free.

Similar systems can be used for takeaway food as well.

3. Encourage hand washing

If your staff do need to handle reusables items, make sure that they wash their hands afterwards.

If washing hands between interactions isn't practical, encourage staff to use hand sanitiser instead.

4. Only accept clean reusables

It's important that customers keep their reusables clean to minimise any hygiene risks. Your staff can also refuse items that are dirty and might pose a contamination risk.

If you can't put contact free systems in place, you may wish to wash reusables before you accept them.

Find out more

If you want to find out more about how to safely accept reusables and current guidance on reusables, see our helpful links below:

- [City to Sea - Reusables during Covid](#)
- [Government Guidance - Covid and Food](#)
- [Health Experts Statement on Reusable Items](#)
- [Food Standards Agency - Guidance on Reusable containers](#)

If you have questions or need some advice please get in touch via ditchingdisposables@changeworks.org.uk