



AS IT IS

Can Tents at Restaurants Prevent Coronavirus Infections?

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Some restaurants are providing plastic **tents** so people can stay separated from each other while they eat. But are these tents a safe way to eat out during the coronavirus health crisis?

Health experts say outdoor tents are a little safer than eating inside. But, not all tents are equal, they add.

Many restaurants are putting up single tents, and other outdoor structures that let people who are eating together avoid being indoors. The coronavirus spreads more easily when people are indoors.

Experts say the tents should have good air **circulation**. A tent with four walls and a **roof**, for example, might not have better air circulation than an indoor dining room.

“The more airflow through the structure, the better it is,” says Dr. Isaac Weisfuse. He is a public health expert at Cornell University.

Tents are a creative answer, but should not be shared with people you do not see every day. That advice is from Craig Hedberg. He is a professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health.

“If it’s keeping you from being in a common airspace with other people, then that’s a good thing,” he added.

Aubree Gordon is an associate professor at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. She said tents should be cleaned and left open for at least 20 minutes after they are used by one group of people. She also said servers should not directly serve food but should leave it outside the tent. This would decrease the risk of infection.

Tents are a way that restaurants can serve people food when many areas have restrictions barring people from gathering inside eating places. But using them means additional costs.

In Detroit, Lumen restaurant asks \$30 for each person for a heated structure for two hours. Lumen has larger tents that can seat six people. The group must buy at least \$300 worth of food.

Each time the tent is emptied, the structure is cleaned with **sanitizer** and aired out for 30 minutes, said Gabby Milton, who is the restaurant's managing partner.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

The Associated Press reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Mario Ritter, Jr. was the editor.

Words in This Story

tent – *n.* a shelter made of cloth that is easy to put up and take down for use outside

roof – *n.* the top covering of a building or structure

circulation – *n.* the movement of air through a structure

sanitizer – *n.* something that makes surfaces clean and free from disease