

COVID-19 Guidance When Shopping for Essentials

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by a new coronavirus. The virus spreads from close contact with respiratory droplets of a person with COVID-19. Some people may unknowingly spread the infection before their [symptoms](#) appear. Others may not have symptoms, but are still contagious. For more information about COVID-19, visit www.toronto.ca/COVID19.

The following recommendations can help you protect yourself, and prevent the spread of COVID-19 when you are shopping. Also, consider downloading the [COVID Alert app](#) so you can be notified directly if you have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.

Stay home if you are sick

- Do not go out when you are sick or if you are self-isolating.
- Limit contact with household members.
- Visit our [website](#) to learn what to do if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed.

Limit the number of shopping trips

- Order supplies online, if possible.
- Minimize the number of trips for groceries, medication and other essentials, to once a week.
- Keep track of the essentials you already have at home. Try to be creative and use what you have before deciding to go out (e.g. try new recipes).
- Offer to pick-up essentials for neighbours, especially vulnerable community members.
- Plan before going out:
 - Make a list of the items that you need to limit the amount of time spent out during your visit.
 - Buy enough for one to two weeks at a time, buying more than this can create strain on supply chains and result in temporary shortages.
 - Try to do all of your shopping at one location.
 - Check the stores website or call in advance to find out when the best time to visit is (i.e. off-peak hours) and to find out about special hours for seniors and vulnerable individuals.
 - Allow for extra time. Stores may limit the number of people entering at a time, and may have a lineup outside the main entrance.
 - Be patient and treat store employees and other customers with kindness and respect.

Safe shopping practices

- Practice physical distancing:
 - Reduce crowding by not bringing extra people with you when going shopping.
 - Households should designate one person to do the shopping, if possible.
 - Keep two metres (six feet) apart from others:
 - Follow physical distancing markers and visual aids (e.g. signage, floor markings) where provided

- Avoid crowded aisles.
- Be courteous to others in front of you by allowing them to complete their selection of items before moving forward.
- If you have to ask a staff member a question, remember to keep your distance.
- Don't crowd the cashier station, and keep your distance from the person in front of you.
- Wait until the person in front of you has finished collecting their items before unloading yours at the cashier station.
- Greet others from a distance with a nod or wave.
- Practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
 - [Wash your hands](#) with soap and water for at least 15 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if your hands are not visibly soiled.
 - If possible, carry hand sanitizer and use it before entering and immediately after exiting the store.
 - [Cover your cough](#) or sneeze into a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
 - Avoid touching your face.
 - Use disinfectant wipes:
 - If provided in the store, wipe down the cart or basket handles and discard the wipe immediately.
 - If possible, bring your own disinfectant wipes.
- Practice general food safety while shopping:
 - Avoid touching items that you are not going to buy.
 - Visually inspect fruit, vegetables and other items prior to selection to ensure they are fresh.
 - Canned food should be free of dents, rust and bulges.
 - Packages should be intact with no ripped or torn packaging.
 - Avoid purchasing bulk food items that are not prepackaged (e.g. candy, nuts).
 - Use contactless payment whenever possible.
 - Never leave food in a hot car as warm temperatures can help bacteria to grow.
 - If reusable bags are permitted, bag your own groceries to minimize touching by other individuals.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces in your vehicle if you touched them before washing/sanitizing your hands (e.g. steering wheel, door handles, radio dials).

Gloves

- Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene, and are not recommended when shopping.
- If you choose to wear gloves, it is important to change/remove them when they become dirty and after exiting the store.
- Avoid touching your face when wearing gloves.
- Discard gloves in a waste receptacle immediately after removing.

- Wash and/or sanitize your hands immediately after removing gloves.

Face masks and coverings

- You must wear a mask or face covering when you are in indoor public spaces such as stores, as per a new City of Toronto [bylaw](#). Some exceptions apply, including children under the age of two, and people with medical conditions that make wearing a mask difficult. Learn about the [proper use and disposal of masks](#).

Putting away your groceries

- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after returning home, handling groceries, bags, food packaging/containers and putting away food.
- Wash fresh fruits and vegetables, under cold running water.
- Refrigerate or freeze perishable foods promptly.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces after unpacking your groceries (e.g. countertops).
- Clean and wash re-usable grocery bags before every use.

Using food delivery services

- Food should be delivered and received with minimal or no contact.
- Prepay for food with a credit card when you order over the phone, or online.
- Delivery should be contactless:
 - Orders should be delivered to your front door or a designated area.
- Maintain two meters (six feet) when receiving a delivery.
- Check the following upon receiving a food delivery:
 - Food should be delivered to you as quickly as possible to ensure it is received at the proper temperatures: "hot food" should be hot and "cold food" should be cold.
 - Food packing should be intact and sealed to prevent leaking and protect the food during transit.
 - Food packaging should be labelled.
 - Check for signs of freshness (i.e. no spoilage and mould).
 - If in doubt, throw it out, or contact the store you purchased the food from.
- After receiving take-out deliveries, transfer the meal to a plate and discard the packaging immediately.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after handling take-out bags/package and before eating.

General food safety practices at home

- Prevent cross contamination:
 - Keep fruits, vegetables and ready to eat foods separate from raw meats.
 - Wash your hands before and after handling or preparing food.
- Cook/reheat food properly to avoid foodborne illness.

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- Use a probe thermometer to check that the food is cooked to the proper internal temperature.
 - Cooking and reheating food to recommended internal temperatures for beef, poultry, pork should kill the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Visit our [website](#) to learn more about food safety at home.

Food Access

- Seniors and vulnerable residents who are in self-isolation, feeling ill or need help obtaining food, can call [211 for assistance](#).
- Visit our [website](#) for more information about food access strategies and delivery services.

More information

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References

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