COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings

This document contains guidance for retail operators to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It describes the requirements operators must comply with under the Reopening Ontario Act. For related information, please refer to Guidance for Malls and Shopping Centres.

As every retail setting is different, it is ultimately the responsibility of the operator to review their own site-specific circumstances and assess their ability to implement appropriate infection prevention and control measures.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist individuals and businesses with information related to the Ontario Government’s reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions will constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional.

Protective Measures to Keep Everyone Safe

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Keep a two metre/six feet distance from those you don’t live with, when possible.
- Wash your hands often, and avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear a face mask or covering when you are in indoor public spaces, and when you cannot maintain a two metre/six foot distance outdoors.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
### Businesses That May Open (O. Reg. 82/20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of retail business</th>
<th>Restricted hours</th>
<th>In-person shopping, at 25% capacity</th>
<th>By appointment only, at 25% capacity</th>
<th>Curbside pick-up and delivery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers markets, other stores that primarily sell food, and pharmacies</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount and big box retailers that sell groceries to the public</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓ with restrictions</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores that primarily sell alcohol</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety supply stores, businesses that sell, rent or repair assistive/mobility/ medical devices, and optical stores that sell prescription eyewear to the public</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor/recreational vehicle sales</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓ with restrictions</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outdoor markets</strong>, only if they primarily sell food to the public</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor garden centres and plant nurseries; indoor greenhouses that engage in retail sales to the public</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail stores operated by a telecommunications provider or service</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓ with restrictions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Must open no earlier than 7 a.m. and close no later than 8 p.m. Must not deliver goods to patrons outside the hours of 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

*b* In-store shopping must only be available for grocery items, pet care supplies, household cleaning supplies, pharmaceutical items, health care items, school supplies, household safety supplies, and personal care items.

### Other retail businesses

Other retail businesses (those not described above) may open under the following conditions:

- Sales must be exclusively made using an alternative method of sale that does not require patrons to enter the indoor area of the business, including curbside pickup or delivery.
- If a business allows patrons to pick-up items, it must:
  - have a public entrance that opens onto a street or exterior sidewalk, or
in the case of a business in a shopping mall, permit patrons to pick up the items at a designated location established by the shopping mall.

- An item may only be provided for pickup if the patron ordered the item before arriving at the business premises.
- Patrons may only pick up orders by making a prior appointment.
- The business must open no earlier than 7 a.m. and close no later than 8 p.m. and must not deliver goods to patrons outside the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m.

Review O. Reg. 82/20, Schedule 2 for more information.

**Measures for All Workplaces, Organizations & Businesses**

Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](https://www.toronto.ca/covid19/) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and patrons safe. Operators must also consider the following:

- **Health screening for staff and patrons**
  - Staff must be [actively screened](https://www.toronto.ca/covid19/) prior to their work shift.
  - Patrons must [self-screen](https://www.toronto.ca/covid19/) prior to entering the premises.
  - Post [signs](https://www.toronto.ca/covid19/) on the front door explaining the conditions for entry, including screening.

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
  - Provide hand sanitizer with 70–90% alcohol concentration in dispensers outside the entrance to the store, particularly near high-touch services such as bank machines, touch-screen signs, elevators, escalators and stair railings.
  - Encourage everyone to use hand sanitizer when they enter.

- **Cleaning and disinfection**
  - Business hours may need to be adjusted to accommodate enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices.
  - Employees should use gloves if it is anticipated that hands will come into contact with bodily fluids, broken skin, mucous membranes, contaminated equipment or environmental surfaces.
  - Discourage use of touch screens for wayfinding.
  - Clean and disinfect shopping carts and baskets after each use. Those which cannot be easily sanitized should not be provided (e.g. cloth bags). Have a clearly designated drop off area for used carts and baskets.
  - Consider providing disinfecting wipes for customer use to wipe down handles on shopping carts and hand baskets.
  - Do not hand out any coupons, samples, testers, or flyers.
  - Remove soft/porous items that are difficult to sanitize such as upholstery, cushions and rugs.
Safety Plan
Operators must prepare a safety plan, and the plan must:

- Describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce spread of COVID.
- Include measures for screening, physical distancing, masks, cleaning, disinfecting and personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Be in writing and made available to any person for review, on request.
- Be posted in a visible place to come to the attention of those working or attending the location.

Use the [COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist](#) to develop your safety plan.

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. Avoid recirculating air.
- Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
  - Seating and activities should be arranged away from areas with high airflow (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- Rooms where indoor ceiling fans are used should have an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.

Capacity Limits

Operators shall limit the number of people in the place of business or facility so that:

- the members of the public are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres/six feet from every other person; and
- the total number of members of the public in the business or facility at any one time does not exceed 25 per cent capacity.

- This can be determined by taking the total square metres of floor space accessible to the public, not including shelving and store fixtures, dividing that number by 16 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
Discount and big box stores must calculate capacity limits based on floor area accessible to the public in which the products permitted for in-store shopping are normally displayed for sale.

- All operators that engage in retail sales to the public must post a sign in a location visible to the public that states the maximum capacity they are permitted to operate under.

**Facilitate Physical Distancing**

- All patrons must maintain two metres/six feet distancing while shopping and standing in line inside and outside.
- Monitor entrances to control staff and patrons entering the store.
- Rearrange store layout and remove non-essential furniture/items, to allow ease of movement for physical distancing.
- Establish directional aisles to manage patron flow.
- Staff should remind clients to stay two metres/six feet apart, as much as possible.
- Use every other check out station if less than two metres/six feet apart.
- Shipping and deliveries should be completed in a designated area, away from patrons and most staff, if possible.
- Consider patron appointments and coordinate them to allow adequate space to maintain physical distancing between patrons and staff.

**Install Transparent Barriers**

- Consider installing plexiglass or other physical barriers where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- To be effective the barrier must be large enough to create a shield between the breathing zones of the people on either side.
- Download more information about installing effective barriers.

**Manage Lines**

- Operators must ensure that patrons lining up or congregating outside their establishment:
  - maintain at least two metres/six feet physical distancing from other groups of persons, and
  - wear a mask or face covering, unless entitled to an exemption.
- Post physical distancing signs at all entrances, service desks or otherwise.
- Place visual / textural markers (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) spaced two metres/six feet apart for patrons lining up when waiting to enter the store and cash-out.
- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding patrons to keep two metres/six feet apart.

**Use of Masks and Face Coverings**
- The use of non-medical masks or face coverings is required in all indoor public spaces, as per a new City of Toronto bylaw. Operators are required to develop a policy on the wearing of masks. Use the Mask By-law Checklist and Sample Policy.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment that covers the eyes, nose and mouth must be worn if, while providing service in an indoor area, the person
  - is required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
  - is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person described above.

**Music/Noise**
- Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.

**Food and Beverages**
- Indoor and outdoor dining is **not permitted**. Prohibit consumption of food or drink while inside the store.
- Food sampling must be served in a prepackaged format, for take-home consumption. See COVID-19 Guidance for Food Stores for more information.
- Designate an appropriate space, away from patrons, for employees to consume food and drink. Ensure this area follows all applicable public health measures (e.g., physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting).

**Additional Considerations**

**Product displays**
- Consider stocking shelves and arranging product displays when the store is closed to patrons. Where stocking or product display arrangements are needed during operating hours, define safe practices for workers. Consider closing aisles while restocking or using signs to remind patrons to stay two metres/six feet apart.
- Workers should wash their hands before and after stocking/rearranging shelves or product displays.
Assisting patrons

- Consider stopping, reducing or modifying your patron interaction, demonstration, and assistance practices to reduce contact intensity and number of contacts. Maintain a two metre/six foot distance when providing service face-to-face. Ensure both patron and staff are wearing a mask.
- To minimize physical contact with patrons, offer online or telephone orders with delivery or pick up services as alternatives to shopping in person.

Checkout and returns/exchanges

- Patrons who bring their own reusable shopping bags should pack their own bags at checkout.
- Use tap features at checkout instead of cash, where possible.
- Returns should only be allowed for merchandise that can be wiped down or quarantined (e.g. 24 to 72 hours) before re-sale.

Fitting rooms

- Patrons must not be permitted to occupy adjacent fitting room stalls at any one time.
- Encourage patrons to sanitize their hands before trying on clothes.
- Surfaces in fitting room stalls should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Remove unnecessary or decorative objects from inside the fitting rooms.
- Do not hand customers tokens or number cards. Consider other options to count or limit the number of items brought into a fitting room.
- Ask customers to leave unwanted items in a designated location, including hangers.
- Items that have been tried on should be quarantined in a sanitized bin or space before returning them to the rack/shelf.

Increase Communication with Patrons

- Provide information to patrons about retail operations (e.g. public health measures, changes to store policies) through different platforms (e.g. website, email, social media).
- Post signs at the entrance instructing patrons and staff not to enter if they are sick.
- Download information and post educational materials to encourage healthy behaviours that reduce the spread of COVID-19:
  o [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
  o [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)
Other Resources

Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace
Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace
Guidance for Retail Settings
Province of Ontario Guidance on Health and Safety for Retail Sector during COVID-19
Province of Ontario Retail: Guidance for Health and Safety Tip sheet
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety COVID-19 Tip Sheets

More Information
For more information visit www.toronto.ca/COVID19 to stay up to date.

Reference