COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings

This document contains guidance for retail operators to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For related information, please refer to Guidance for Malls and Shopping Centres.

Toronto is currently in the Grey Zone of the provincial regulations (O. Reg. 82/20). This guidance document describes the requirements operators must comply with under the Reopening Ontario Act.

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. For information about how to assess COVID-19 risks in your setting and to plan risk modifications, please refer to the Toronto Public Health Risk Assessment and Risk Mitigation Guide for Businesses during COVID-19.

Businesses That May Open (O. Reg. 82/20)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of retail business</th>
<th>Type of service permitted</th>
<th>In-person shopping</th>
<th>By appointment</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>✔ At 50% capacity</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discount and big box retailers that sell groceries to the public, and stores that sell alcohol</td>
<td>✔ At 25% capacity</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</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>✔ With restrictions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor/recreational vehicle sales</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔ With restrictions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor markets, including farmer’s markets and holiday markets, only if they primarily sell food to the public</td>
<td>✔ With restrictions</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Retail stores operated by a telecommunications provider or service</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>✔ Repairs, technical support only</td>
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<tr>
<td>General retail (all other retail, including hardware stores, pet food, computer stores, etc.)</td>
<td>❌</td>
<td>❌</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
* Businesses allowing curbside pick-up must:
  o have a public entrance that opens onto a street or exterior sidewalk, or
  o 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.

Review [O. Reg. 82/20](https://www.ontario.ca/document/view/167701) for more information.

**COVID-19 transmission**

**Respiratory transmission:** COVID-19 is an illness that is spread mainly from person-to-person through close contact from respiratory droplets of someone with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres/six feet when we cough, sneeze or talk.

**Contaminated surfaces:** It is possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. This new coronavirus can survive on plastic and stainless steel surfaces for up to 72 hours.

### 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.

### Measures for All Workplaces, Organizations & Businesses

Every business owner should develop and communicate policies concerning staff and patron health and safety. Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](https://www.ontario.ca/document/view/167701) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and patrons safe, including:

- **Staff attendance and operations**
  - Employers should enable and support workers to work remotely wherever possible, and accommodate household needs related to virtual education and dependent care.

- **Health screening for staff and patrons**
  - Require screening of patrons at entrances (e.g., health questionnaire).
  - Post [signs](https://www.ontario.ca/document/view/167701) on the front door explaining the conditions for entry.

- **Mask/face coverings for staff and patrons**
• **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
  o 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.
  o Encourage everyone to use hand sanitizer when they enter.

• **Cleaning and disinfection**
  o Business hours may need to be adjusted to accommodate enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices.
  o 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.
  o Discourage use of touch screens for wayfinding.
  o Shopping carts and baskets must be sanitized between each patron. Those which cannot be easily sanitized should not be provided (e.g. cloth bags).
  o Do not hand out any coupons, samples, testers, or flyers.
  o Remove soft/porous items that are difficult to sanitize such as upholstery, cushions and rugs.

• **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace**

  **Safety Plan**
  Operators must prepare and make available 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.

  **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.
    o 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.
• For more information, review TPH’s COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation fact sheet.

Capacity Limits
• Operators permitted to be open to the public shall limit the number of persons in the place of business or facility so that:
  o the members of the public are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person; and
  o the number of persons occupying any room that is open to the public does not exceed:
    ▪ **25 per cent capacity** of the particular room for discount and big box retailers, and stores that sell alcohol.
      ➢ 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.
    ▪ **50 per cent capacity** of the particular room for all other retailers.
      ➢ 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 8 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
• 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 standing in line inside and outside.
• Walk through the store to identify areas needing adjustments to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
• Estimate the number of patrons and staff allowed onsite to have ease of movement while maintaining two metres/six feet of distance from others.
• 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:
  o Maintain at least two metres/six feet physical distancing from other groups of persons, and
  o 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. More information is available here.
• Appropriate personal protective equipment that covers the eyes, nose and mouth must be worn if, while providing service in an indoor area, the person
  o is required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
  o 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 dining, including providing food or beverages for consumption inside a store, is **not permitted**.
- Prohibit consumption of food or drink while inside the store.

**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**
- Fitting rooms are not permitted to open at this time.
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:
  - [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
  - [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](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19) to stay up to date.

Reference