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

- Get a COVID-19 vaccine.
- 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 during Step 1 of Roadmap to Reopen (O. Reg. 82/20)

- The following businesses that engage in retail sales to the public may open if they meet applicable conditions:
  - Supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers' markets and other stores that primarily sell food
  - Pharmacies
- Discount and big box retailers selling groceries
- Safety supply stores
- Businesses that primarily sell, rent or repair assistive devices, aids or supplies, mobility devices, aids or supplies or medical devices, aids or supplies.
- Optical stores that sell prescription eyewear to the public.
- Retail stores operated by telecommunications providers.
- Stores sell alcohol, including beer, wine and spirits.
- Outdoor garden centres and plant nurseries.
- Indoor greenhouses

The businesses noted above must comply with the following conditions:
- They must limit the total number of members of the public in the place of business so that the total number of members of the public in the place of business at any one time does not exceed **25 per cent capacity**.
  - This can be calculated by taking the total square metres of floor area 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.
- They must ensure that any music played at the place of business is not at a decibel level that exceeds the level at which normal conversation is possible.

For more information, see [COVID-19 Guidance for Farmers' Fresh Food & Holiday Markets](https://example.com) and [COVID-19 Guidance for Food Stores](https://example.com) as applicable.

Other retail businesses (those not described above) may open under the following conditions:
- They must limit the number of members of the public in the place of business so that the total number of members of the public in the place of business at any one time does not exceed **15 per cent capacity**.
  - This can be calculated by taking the total square metres of floor area accessible to the public, not including shelving and store fixtures, dividing that number by 26.67 and rounding the result down to the nearest whole number.
- They must ensure that any music played at the place of business is not at a decibel level that exceeds the level at which normal conversation is possible.

**Note:** Non-essential businesses in malls may only open for in-person shopping if they have a public entrance that opens onto a street or exterior sidewalk.

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.

Review [O. Reg. 82/20, Schedule 7](https://example.com) for more information.
Measures for All Workplaces, Organizations & Businesses

Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) 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](#) prior to their work shift.
  - Patrons must [self-screen](#) prior to entering the premises.
  - Post [signs](#) 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.

**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.
- Masks are required while waiting in line indoors, and strongly recommended outdoors.
- 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.

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
  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 is not permitted. Prohibit consumption of food or drink while inside the store. See COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants, Bars & Other Food Service Premises for more information.
- 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
- 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
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