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 red control level of the provincial government's COVID-19 Response Framework. This guidance document describes the requirements retail operators must comply with under the Reopening Ontario Act and City of Toronto specific enhanced measures.

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.

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, as per the provincial requirements and City bylaw, and when you cannot maintain a two metre/six foot distance outdoors.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Workplace Health and Safety

Every business owner should develop and communicate policies concerning staff and customer health and safety. Review the Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace to plan and implement protocols to keep staff and customers safe, including:

- Staff attendance and operations
Require a **compliance officer** to ensure implementation of occupational health and safety and infection prevention & control measures.

### Health screening for staff and customers
- Require screening of patrons at entrances (e.g., health questionnaire).
- Post **signs** on the front door explaining the conditions for entry.

### Mask/face coverings for staff and customers

### 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.
- Shopping carts and baskets must be sanitized between each customer. Those which cannot be easily sanitized should not be provided (e.g. cloth bags).
- 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.
  - Refer to Public Health Ontario’s [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/our-programs-and-services/cleaning-and-disinfection-for-public-settings) for more information.

### Managing COVID-19 in the workplace

#### 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.
Proper use of cloth 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 and protocols 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
  - 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.

Facilitate physical distancing

- Walk through the store to identify areas needing adjustments to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Estimate the number of customers 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 customers 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 customer 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 customers and most staff, if possible.
- Consider customer appointments and coordinate them to allow adequate space to maintain physical distancing between customers and staff.

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 customers lining up when waiting to enter the store and cash-out.
- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres/six feet apart.

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.

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.

Additional considerations

Product displays
- Consider stocking shelves and arranging product displays when the store is closed to customers. 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 customers to stay two metres/six feet apart.
- Workers should wash their hands before and after stocking/rearranging shelves or product displays.

Assisting customers
- Consider stopping, reducing or modifying your customer 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 customer and staff are wearing a mask.
- To minimize physical contact with customers, offer online or telephone orders with delivery or pick up services as alternatives to shopping in person.

Checkout and returns/exchanges
- Customers 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 customers**
- Provide information to customers 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 customers 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 Retail Settings](https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/3324f808-a6ae-4aad-9fd1-4af0735dee2c/resource/36c8cf24-271d-4e18-813e-c727effeb47c/download/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-retail.pdf)
- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety COVID-19 Tip Sheets](https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/3324f808-a6ae-4aad-9fd1-4af0735dee2c/resource/36c8cf24-271d-4e18-813e-c727effeb47c/download/covid-19-relaunch-guidance-retail.pdf)

For more information, visit [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19) to stay up to date.

**Reference**