

## COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings

This document contains guidance for retail operators to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as they re-open their premises. 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. 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.
- Offer alternative shopping methods such as online, delivery and/or curbside pick-up.
- Keep a two metre/six feet distance from others, 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 an indoor public setting.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

### Protect and monitor employee health

- Every business owner should develop and communicate staff policies concerning staff health and safety, including attendance policies and staff screening for [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- Every business owner should be aware of what to do if there is a case of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Please refer to [Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses](#).

## Stay home when you are sick

- Post [signs](#) on the front door explaining the conditions for entry.
  - Those with symptoms should not enter the store to avoid spreading the virus.
  - Invite customers to return when they are symptom-free.

## 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 for foot traffic,
- Post [physical distancing signs](#) at all entrances, by cashiers or service counters.
- Provide visual cues such as tape, stickers or safety cones every two metres/six feet for customers lining up when waiting to enter and when waiting to cash out.
- 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.

## 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.

## 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](#).

## Support and encourage proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- Wash hands with liquid soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds frequently, including before and after the handling of personal protective equipment (e.g. masks, gloves), and after each

customer interaction. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration).

- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer in a dispenser for staff and customers to use, and place throughout the store (e.g. entrance/exit, check-out).
- Cover cough or sneeze with the elbow or a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash hands.
- Post [Cover your Cough](#) and [Hand Sanitizing](#) signs in visible locations.

## Implement enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection practices

- Ensure [cleaning and disinfecting](#) of high-touch surfaces before opening, at least twice a day, and more frequently as needed. High-touch surfaces include items such as door handles, counters, cabinet doors, elevator buttons, escalator handrails, touch screen surfaces, and keypads.
- Store shopping carts and baskets must be sanitized between each customer. Those which cannot be easily sanitized should not be provided (e.g. cloth bags).
- Business hours may need to be adjusted to accommodate enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices.
- When scheduling appointments, allow additional time between clients for proper cleaning and disinfecting of workstations and equipment.
- Place signs and information to discourage customers from handling items they do not intend to buy.
- Do not hand out any coupons, samples, testers, or flyers.
- Remove magazines and soft/porous items such as cushions and rugs that are difficult to sanitize.
- Refer to [Health Canada's list of hard surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) for information on disinfectants:
  - Disinfectants must have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
  - Check the expiry dates of products and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Chlorine bleach solutions may be prepared and used for disinfection if appropriate for the surface.
- Ensure a minimum of two minutes disinfectant contact time and allow to air dry.

## 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 for 72 hours before re-sale.

### Fitting rooms

- Fitting rooms may be used under the following conditions:
  - Patrons must not be permitted to occupy adjacent fitting room stalls at any one time.
  - The fitting room stalls must 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 for at least 24 hours before returning them to the rack.

### 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.
- Post educational materials to encourage healthy behaviours that reduce the spread of COVID-19:
  - [Physical Distancing](#)
  - [Face Masks & Coverings](#)
  - [Protect Yourself](#)
  - [Information about COVID-19](#)
  - [Hand Sanitizing](#)
  - [Cover your Cough](#)
  - [Screening Poster for Entrances](#)

**Other Resources**

[Guidance for Employers, Workplaces, and Businesses](#)

[Guidance for Malls and Shopping Centres](#)

[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**

Information changes frequently. Please visit [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19) to stay up to date.