COVID-19 Guidance for Malls and Shopping Centres

This document contains guidance for operators of mall/shopping centres to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For public health guidance on individual retail settings and stores, refer to COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Settings.

Toronto is currently in the grey lockdown zone of the provincial government's COVID-19 Response Framework. This guidance document describes the requirements operators must comply with under the Reopening Ontario Act.

As every mall and shopping centre 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.

Provincial Orders

- Non-essential retail outlets in malls are permitted to be open for pick-up or delivery only. In-person retail shopping is not permitted.
- Access to shopping malls is allowed for limited purposes, including access to businesses and organizations permitted to be open (e.g. pharmacy, dentist); food courts open for take-away.
  - Malls may also establish designated pick-up points inside or adjacent to the mall.
- All patrons must wear a mask and maintain two metres/six feet physical distancing while standing in line inside and outside.
- Operators must limit the number of persons in a place of business or facility so that:
  - the members of the public are able to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the business or facility; and
  - the number of people occupying any room that is open to the public in the business does not exceed 50 per cent of the capacity of the particular room.

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 indoors, and outdoors when physical distancing is difficult.
- 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**
- **Health screening for staff and customers**
  - Require screening of patrons at mall entrances (e.g. questionnaire).
- **Mask/face coverings for staff and customers**
- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
  - Provide hand sanitizer with 70-90% alcohol concentration outside entrances and in multiple locations throughout the mall (e.g. near high-touch surfaces such as bank machines, touch-screen signs, elevators, escalators, stairs, and food courts).
  - Encourage everyone to use hand sanitizer when they enter the mall.
- **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.
  - Shared items (e.g. shopping carts, baskets, strollers) 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.
- **Managing COVID-19 in the workplace**

Safety Plan

- **Safety plan** must be prepared and made available. The safety plan must:
  - Be available no later than seven days after the requirement first applies.
  - Describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce spread of COVID-19.
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) systems

- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Increase outdoor air-exchange by:
  - maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or
  - open windows and doors, if it is safe to do so.
- Use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep seating and activities away from air vents and areas with high airflow.
- Do not obstruct HVAC inlets and outlets.
- When using ceiling fans, use an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, position fan with an upward movement to avoid blowing of air across people and surfaces.
- There is no evidence the use of portable air purifiers will prevent the spread of COVID-19. If used, follow the manufacturer's directions to decide where best to place the device. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on maintenance.

### Use of masks and face coverings

- The use of non-medical masks or face coverings is required in all indoor public spaces, as per the City of Toronto [bylaw and O. Reg. 263/20](https://www.toronto.ca/COVID19/COVID-19-Municipal-GuidANCE.TXT). Operators are required to develop a policy and protocols on the wearing of masks. More information is available [here](https://www.toronto.ca/COVID19/COVID-19-Municipal-GuidANCE.TXT).
- 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.
- Post signs encouraging people to dispose of used masks safely in garbage bins.

### Facilitate physical distancing

- Adjust operating hours to control the number of people permitted in the mall at one time.
  - Consider ways to support vulnerable populations such as dedicated mall hours.
- Assign employees or security to assist with ensuring physical distancing in high-traffic areas.
- Monitor entrances to control the number of people entering the mall at any given time.
Restrict and/or direct the flow of people into, throughout and exiting the mall (e.g. designate some doors for entry or exit to avoid two-way traffic, designate some hallways for one-way traffic with signs and floor decals).

- Encourage visitors to exit the mall as quickly as possible following completion of their shopping/transactions.

- Remove or separate seating at least two metres/six feet in shared spaces including food courts.
- Limit the number of people in washrooms at any one time.
- Close toilets or urinals that are less than two metres/six feet apart without barriers between them.

**Install transparent barriers**

- Consider installing plexiglass or other physical barriers where physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as at information kiosks.
- To be effective the barrier must be large enough to create a shield between the breathing zones of the people on either side.
- Download 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 customers lining up when waiting to enter.
- Assign staff to monitor lines and to make public announcements reminding customers to keep two metres/six feet apart.

**Mall attractions and activities**

- Mall activities and attractions are currently **not permitted**.

**Music/noise**

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

**Food Service and Food Courts**

- Indoor dining, including in food courts is **not permitted**. Food courts may remain open for take-away only.
- Prohibit consumption of food or drink while walking through malls.
- Food and beverage is to be consumed as take-out only.
- Mall operators and food court vendors must refer to COVID-19 Guidance for Restaurants.

**Increase communication with customers**
- Communicate to patrons, tenants and staff about the changes you have made to protect them against COVID-19 through multiple platforms (e.g. signs, website, social media, voice mail).
- Use public announcement systems frequently to deliver key messages to mall visitors (e.g. physical distancing, sanitizing hands at entrances, no gathering/crowding in one area).
- Encourage patrons, tenants and staff to download the COVID Alert app so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.
- Post signs at the entrance instructing visitors, tenants and employees not to enter if they are sick.
- Download information and post or promote 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 to stay up to date.