

COVID-19: advice for essential retailers during COVID-19 pandemic

Essential retailers are providing critical services in their communities by ensuring safe and reliable access to food, supplies and other provisions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for these retailers to implement appropriate public health measures and to adjust their operations to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19 amongst their employees and customers. Below is advice for essential retailers, such as grocers, based on existing advice available here: [Preventing COVID-19 in the workplace: employers, employees and essential service workers](#) and [Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

To prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 in their workplaces, employers can:

- Promote the use of **individual public health measures to staff and customers** to prevent transmission of COVID-19 by posting signage on (available here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/awareness-resources.html>).
 - Stay home if you are feeling unwell or isolate yourself from others the minute you start feeling unwell, notify your manager, and go home as soon as possible, avoiding public transportation and taking measures to protect others around you;
 - Staying home if isolating or in quarantine (self-isolating) as per public health advice or direction;
 - Enable physical distancing (of 2 metres) and/or barriers between individuals (e.g., employees and customers);
 - Hand hygiene;
 - Respiratory etiquette;
 - Encourage the use of non-medical masks or facial covering (e.g., homemade cloth mask, dust mask, or bandana) for employees and customers in situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained ¹;
- Develop and/or enhance your retail's environmental cleaning procedures and protocols:
 - Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces such as shopping carts/basket handles, cash registers, surface counters, customer service counters;
 - Consider assigning a dedicated employee for every shift to clean and disinfect shopping carts and baskets between customers;
 - Choose products that clean and disinfect all at once (e.g. premixed commercially available disinfectant cleaning solutions and/or wipes when available); and
 - Use only approved hard-surface disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms the disinfectant product is approved for use in Canada.
- Ensure that infection prevention and control (IPC) equipment and supplies are available for employees and customers:

¹ Some people may transmit COVID-19 even though they do not show any symptoms. In situations where physical distancing is difficult to maintain, employees should consider wearing a non-medical mask or facial covering (e.g., homemade cloth mask, dust mask, or bandana) as an additional measure to protect others around them. Non-medical masks or facial coverings that cover the mouth and nose stop the wearer's respiratory droplets from reaching other people or contaminating common surfaces. Wearing a non-medical mask or facial covering (e.g., homemade cloth mask, dust mask, bandana), in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it.

- Place alcohol-based hand sanitizer, with a minimum of 60% alcohol, near high traffic areas (e.g., entrance and exit doors) and near high-touch surfaces (e.g., pay stations);
- Ensure that staff and public washrooms are always well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels;
- Ensure that cleaning and disinfecting products are readily available for staff to use, including plastic-lined waste containers and hand hygiene products.
- Modify service delivery approach to prevent and limit contact between employees and customers and amongst customers:
 - Advise customers not to touch items/goods that they will not be purchasing;
 - Do not sell bulk items, except via gravity feed bins, or where staff dispense the bulk items and are trained on how to do so hygienically;
 - Post signs at the entrance and at each check out counters indicating no customer packaging (e.g., containers, reusable bags, or boxes) are to be brought in or used or placed on check out counters;
 - Provide clean carry-out bags for purchased food and grocery products.
 - Encourage tap payment over pin pad use and money exchange, if possible.
 - Limit the handling of credit cards and loyalty cards wherever possible, by allowing customers to scan.
 - Offer online or telephone food and grocery orders with delivery or pick up services as alternatives to shopping in person.
 - Offer dedicated shopping hours for seniors and other vulnerable people, such as the first hour of operation of the day, immediately after the store has been cleaned and disinfected.
- Modify infrastructure to enhance physical distancing by 2 metres:
 - Determine maximum number of persons allowed in the store at any one time to maintain physical distancing between staff and customers.
 - A good rule of thumb when calculating is one person per 2 metres squared or 4 square meters of retail floor space.
 - Display clear signs in multiple locations that indicate the maximum number of customers and staff a store can accommodate at any one time.
 - Consider monitoring the number of customers and staff entering and leaving the store. Once the maximum number of persons for a store is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.
 - Install physical barriers such as Plexiglas at check out or other service counters to create a barrier between the employees and customers.
 - Use a physical queue line controls such as crowd control cordons at entrances and in check-out lines and outside the stores.
 - Place markers such as tape or cones every 2 metres to provide customers with visible queues.
 - Establish one-way directional flow in aisles, if possible, if aisles are particularly narrow.
- Provide frequent communication to customers:
 - Display signs promoting public health measures such as physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene in visible areas; and

- Consider assigning a dedicated employee every shift to relay important IPC messages to customers upon their entrance in the store.
- Provide education and training to staff on COVID-19 prevention measures, including the use of equipment (e.g., non-medical mask or facial covering and gloves).
- Enhance employee resilience:
 - Provide opportunities for employees to give feedback and suggestions on how operations have changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - Acknowledge employees' concerns about risks associated with the pandemic and provide resources for psychological support such as a distress centre phone line; and
 - Adopt a policy in which employees are required to stay home if they are sick and in which there will be no repercussions for doing so.

To prevent and limit the spread of COVID-19 in their workplaces, employees can:

- Read and comply with instructions from employer and local public health.
- Adhere and comply with individual public health measures:
 - Wash your hand often with soap and water for at least 20 second, or alternately, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after touching/handling surfaces and/or objects touched by others (e.g., cash, loyalty cards).
 - Practice respiratory etiquette;
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth;
 - Stay home if you are feeling unwell or isolate yourself from others the minute you start feeling unwell, notify your manager, and go home as soon as possible, avoiding public transportation and taking measures to protect others around you; and
 - Stay home if isolating or quarantining (self-isolating).
- Maintain your distance (ideally 2 metres) with customers and coworkers:
 - Stay behind physical barrier, if available.
 - In situations where physical distancing is difficult to maintain, consider wearing a non-medical mask or facial covering to cover your mouth and nose and stop your respiratory droplets from reaching other people or contaminating common surfaces;
 - If you are alone behind a physical barrier, the use of a non-medical mask or facial covering is not necessary. If you are behind a physical barrier with co-workers or need to move out from behind the physical barrier (and a 2 metre distance is not possible) then the use of a non-medical mask or facial covering should be considered.
 - Wearing a non-medical mask or facial covering is an additional measure to protect others around you. The wearer should consistently adhere to strict hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and physical distancing whenever possible.
 - Limit unavoidable interactions with others to brief ones; and
 - Limit interactions with others during breaks.
- Adhere to workplace IPC practices:
 - Use non-medical masks or facial coverings and personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, as directed when necessary; and
 - If you use equipment, ensure thorough hand cleaning before and after each use.
- Keep your environment clean by using the cleaning/disinfecting supplies provided by your employer:

- Clean high touch surfaces and objects such as cash register, interact/credit card machine, conveyor belt, and bagging area in your work area.