



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Food and Grocery Stores

Based on the Provincial Health Officer's Gathering and Events Order of June 22, 2021

June 24, 2021, v. 4

This guidance is intended for owners, operators and patrons of retail food and grocery stores. This guidance is based on known evidence as of June 22, 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues and while vaccinations are being provided, it is still critical that we reduce the risk of transmission through physical distancing, as well as ensuring that essential hygienic practices and cleaning processes are followed.

All retail food and grocery stores must comply with relevant Orders, including the Provincial Health Officer's (PHO) [Order on Gatherings and Events](#) (Part I) from June 22, 2021, the [Food and Liquor Serving Premises Order](#), if pertinent, and the order on COVID-19 [Workplace Safety Plans](#).

All [BC Food Premises Regulation](#) requirements remain unchanged and in place. Continue to maintain food safety practices: [Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill](#).

Note that the PHO may announce specific Orders from time to time related to early closures or other changes to protect public health.

Legal disclaimer:

The purpose of the guidance in this document is to provide practical public health advice to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in British Columbia. The guidance does not have legal authority; however, not following the guidance may leave individuals or organizations open to legal action. The guidance does not supersede orders or direction under the *Public Health Act* or any other provincial or federal legislation and is subject to changes.



Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.



Purpose of the Guidance

To provide information on ways to comply with the PHO Order on Gatherings and Events (Part I, Retail Businesses), which applies to owners, operators and patrons of retail food and grocery stores.

As an owner or operator, using the guidance will support you when preparing or amending your [COVID-19 Safety Plan](#). The COVID-19 Safety Plans must be posted on your website (if applicable) and at your workplace so that it is readily available for review by anyone who may attend the site, including the public. A copy must also be available to Environmental Health Officers and WorkSafe BC Officers, upon request.

This guidance is based upon current knowledge, and it should be understood that it is subject to change as new information becomes available and developments arise.

Overview of this document

These guidelines are organized into the following series of tip sheets:

- Employee, Vendor and Volunteer Sickness
- Personal Hygiene
- Make Space between People
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Modify the Environment
- Sanitation
- Managing Information
- Team Scheduling & Meetings



Tip sheet – Employee, Vendor and Volunteer Sickness

Goal: To prevent sick employees, vendors and volunteers from spreading the virus by ensuring they stay home if they are ill.



- Ensure that every worker performs a daily health check before entering the workplace.
- Tell your employees that if they are sick with any symptoms consistent with cold, influenza or COVID-19, even if symptoms are mild, they must remain at home, and contact their family physician/primary care provider or Health Link BC at 8-1-1 for further assistance.
- Thoughtfully plan your sick leave policy to create an environment where employees feel supported in staying home when they are sick and communicate this policy to all staff.
- Have operational contingency plans in place for when employees must remain home when sick (e.g. modifying systems to operate with fewer employees).
- Have employees declare they are symptom-free when signing in for the day.
- Sick employees should use the BC COVID-19 self-assessment tool.
- If while at work, an employee starts experiencing symptoms of respiratory illness consistent with COVID-19, even if symptoms are mild, ask the employee to don a mask, to leave work immediately, go straight home, and contact their family physician/primary care provider or Health Link BC at 8-1-1 for further guidance.
- Ensure that objects and surfaces touched by sick employees who have left the premises are cleaned and disinfected before being used by others.
- Anyone with symptoms can now be assessed and receive a COVID-19 test.
- Testing is not recommended for people who do not have symptoms.
- If an employee has a COVID-19 diagnosis, the local public health department will identify any co-workers who may have been exposed to the sick person.

Resources:

- [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#)



Tip sheet – Personal Hygiene

Goal: To limit the spread of the virus by promoting good personal hygiene including hand washing, hand sanitizing, and cough/sneeze etiquette.



- Replace physical greetings such as handshakes and hugs with non-contact greetings.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer must be provided at entrances with posters reminding of the importance of handwashing/sanitizing following contact with common touch surfaces.
- Washrooms and dedicated hand washing sinks must have, at all times, liquid soap, paper towels and warm running water or hand sanitizer.
- Consider providing designated uniforms laundered by a service or encourage workers to wear clothes that can be washed frequently.
- Employees should wash their hands with soap and water at the start and end of their shift, after using the bathroom, before eating, after returning from a break, and when hands are visibly soiled.
- Employees should avoid the use of hand sanitizer when handling food.
- Employees should practice good hygiene throughout their shift including proper hand hygiene and cough/sneeze etiquette.
- Employees should avoid touching their face without washing hands first and should wash their hands after touching their face.
- There should be no sharing of cigarettes, vaping equipment, utensils, cups, plates and other equipment.
- Employees should be educated about COVID-19 so they know how to minimize its spread.
- Consider providing electronic COVID-19 resources to all employees.

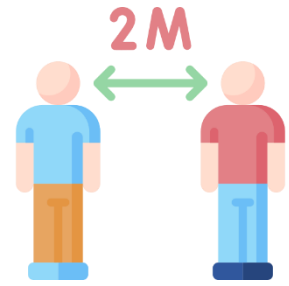
Resources:

- Poster: [BCCDC Handwashing](#)
- Video: [Cough and Sneeze Etiquette](#)
- Video: [Hand Washing](#)
- Link: [BCCDC Vaping, Smoking and COVID-19](#)



Tip sheet – Make Space between People

Goal: To increase space between people and avoid unnecessary contact to eliminate transmission of the virus through respiratory droplets.



- The operator should consider using an entrance and exit strategy (e.g., a separate entrance and exit) to both control the number of patrons present in the store and reduce congestion in these areas.
- Two-metre increments could be marked on the ground where crowds normally form (e.g., line-up areas inside and outside the store or at popular displays).
- Where appropriate, consider placing tape arrows on the ground or arrow posters on walls, dividers or stakes to indicate flow of traffic and reduce risk of transmission.
- Encourage customers to keep moving through the aisles and avoid congestion at the end of aisles.
- Encourage people who stop at the end of aisles to make space for others to move out of or into an aisle.
- Consider allowing only one customer (or customer and companions, e.g., children) at a check-out at a time. At a self check-out have one staff member monitoring physical distancing and sanitizing the self check-out, ideally after each customer has hand contact.
- When check-outs are beside each other and where a two-metre separation cannot be achieved between people, consider leaving every second check-out empty to allow cashiers to self-distance from customers when they pay or pack bags or set up a barrier between cashiers and customers.
- Encourage cashiers to step back from customers when customers use card readers if the card-reader cannot be relocated 2 metres away from the cashier.
- Consider extending operating hours to compensate for reduced total capacity.
- Online or telephone delivery or pick-up services could be offered as an alternative to in-person shopping.

Resources:

- Poster: [Fraser Health Physical Distancing](#)
- Video: [Why do we need to socially distance?](#)



Tip sheet – Personal Protective Equipment



Goal: To understand the purpose and limitations of personal protective equipment (PPE) and to ensure that PPE is selected and used appropriately.

- Masks and other PPE can reduce transmission but should never be relied upon as a sole protective measure to prevent transmission.
- Employees and customers should be aware of the following:
 - Masks can become contaminated on the outside when touched by hands so employees should avoid touching or adjusting them often.
 - Masks that become wet, soiled or damaged are less effective and should be replaced immediately.
 - Masks should be put on and taken off correctly, including not touching the front of the mask, and washing hands immediately after touching the mask.
 - Cloth masks should be washed every day using the warmest water setting and stored in a clean dry place to prevent contamination.
 - Never share masks with others.
 - If a non-cloth mask is used (e.g. medical mask), market managers, employees, vendors, volunteers and customers should be reminded that these items are for single-use only.
 - In addition to following hygienic mask handling procedures (e.g., washing hands after removing a mask), single use masks should not be cleaned for reuse.
- If employees wear gloves, they should be reminded that they are not a substitute for effective hand hygiene and they should change their gloves as often as they would wash their hands, and hands must be washed between glove changes.

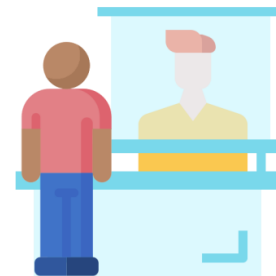
Resources:

- Video: [How to remove disposable gloves](#)
- WorkSafe BC: [Selecting and Using Masks](#)
- WorkSafe BC: [How to Use a Mask](#)
- BCCDC: [Guideline on Types of Masks](#)



Tip sheet – Modify the Environment

Goal: Change the environment to reduce common touch points and make interacting with others safer.



- Consider evaluating whether people can easily practice physical distancing (two metres apart) with the calculated number of people in the store. Evaluate specific areas of the store where it may be a challenge to practice physical distancing.
- Eliminate communal storage areas for employees' personal belongings and consider providing separate sealable bins or lockers instead.
- If possible, increase the amount of outdoor air being brought in and/or natural ventilation. Open windows but be cautious about not allowing pests to gain entrance (install screens if possible).
- Encourage patrons to not touch foods that are on display unless they are purchasing them.
- Encourage the use of touch-free payment options.
- When cash is the only payment option, staff must avoid touching their eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands after they have touched the cash.
- Consider reassessing and updating your COVID-19 Safety Plan as needed.



Tip sheet – Sanitation

Goal: To clean and disinfect common high touch points.

- Multiple plastic lined waste containers should be available to dispose of used tissues, wipes, gloves, and other cleaning materials.
- In addition to following your regular [sanitation plan](#), consider creating a checklist of high-touch surfaces that must be cleaned and disinfected more frequently throughout the day. Examples include: washroom door handles, light switches, faucets, debit machines etc.
- The daily disinfection schedule should be clearly understood by employees.
- Team members could be assigned to specific disinfection responsibilities.
- It is recommended that any person required to clean has received the appropriate training, including use of appropriate PPE.
- Employees responsible for cleaning should be equipped with any required personal protective equipment depending on chemicals used (e.g., gloves, goggles, aprons and masks).



SELECTION and USE of DISINFECTANTS for NON-FOOD CONTACT SURFACES:

- Most disinfectants or sanitizers approved for use are sufficient to kill SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19 virus) as long as manufacturer's instructions are followed; special products are not necessary.
- Disinfectants will have a DIN (drug identification number) and clear set of instructions.
- Make sure the appropriate contact time is met (i.e. surfaces must remain wet with disinfectant for the correct length of time in order to destroy any contamination).
- Surfaces that are dirty should be cleaned with soap and water first before disinfecting.

Resources:

- Link: [Health Canada approved disinfectants for COVID-19](#)
- Link: [BCCDC Guideline for Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)



Tip sheet – Managing Information

Goal: To stay informed, follow public health orders and guidance, keep records, and make sure information you share is clear, accurate and easy to find.



- Consider using signage as follows:
 - At the entry to the store to tell anyone entering not to enter if they are feeling ill or have any symptoms.
 - In common areas to remind patrons about physical distancing.
 - Above or beside all washroom and other sinks to explain proper hand washing.
- Employees or a manager should keep daily records of the people who worked together and retain these records for at least 30 days.
- Consider maintaining up-to-date and consistent messaging on websites, social media, emails, press releases, and when speaking with patrons so details are aligned, timely and accurate.
- Employees should be encouraged to provide regular feedback on any issues with COVID-19 prevention measures. Consider providing a means for employees to do this anonymously.

TIPS for EFFECTIVE SIGNAGE:

- Communicate information in multiple languages, if possible, and use diagrams or pictures.
- The font size on signage should be large enough for everyone to read from a distance (i.e., if a person were standing 2 metres away from the sign).
- In wet areas or outside, posters could be placed in plastic sleeves to protect them from water damage.
- Consider placing important signage in conspicuous areas and away from other posted information so it is clearly visible (i.e., avoid posting signs next to product advertisements, coupon boards etc.).

Resources:

- Link: [Translated training materials and signage](#)
- Poster: [BCCDC Do Not Enter if Sick](#)



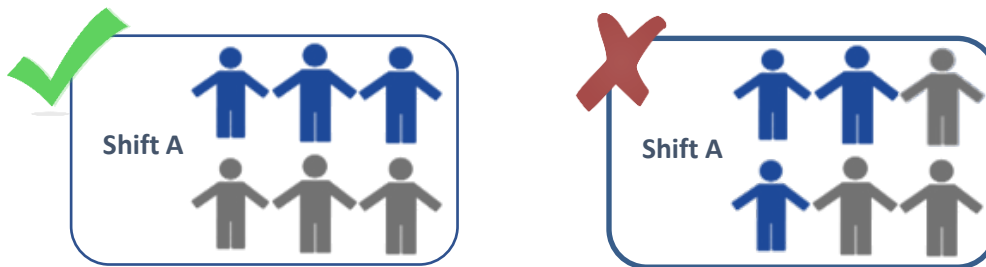
Tip sheet – Team Scheduling & Meetings



Goal: To adjust schedules, rotations and work activities to limit contact between team members.

- Employees who can work from home should do so.
- Consider implementing ‘cohort staffing’ – this means forming small groups of employees who will consistently work together without crossover.

Example of cohort staffing:



- Consider staggering breaks for individuals or cohorts and maintain a predictable break schedule.
- If prep shifts are scheduled, consider staggering start times so there is no overlap with service shifts to minimize the number of employees on site at one time.
- If possible, designate extra rooms or areas for breaks; encourage the use of outdoor spaces.
- Consider using large rooms, outdoor spaces, or virtual options for employee meetings.
- Staff training should be done in small groups with social distancing, or online.
- Employee-only areas could be clearly demarcated so non-employees know not to enter these spaces.
- If your company owns multiple retail food or grocery stores, consider identifying employees who work at multiple outlets and find ways to have employees work at as few sites as possible and eliminate or reduce travel between sites.

