



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



HOW YOU CAN SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Take care of others by taking care of yourself.

Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are sick.

Stay at Home and Physically Distance

Stay at home whenever you can. Maintain 2 meters distance from those outside of your household.

COVID-19 Guidance to Retail Food and Grocery Stores

April 25, 2020

As we continue our efforts to manage and contain the COVID-19 pandemic, retail food and grocery stores play an essential service in every community by ensuring safe and reliable access to food, supplies and other provisions.

At the same time, it is crucial that everyone – including the grocery and retail food sector – adjust how they operate to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19. It is particularly important to incorporate processes to ensure physical distancing in all parts of the store as physical distancing is the primary means of preventing the community spread of COVID-19.

Many retail food and grocery stores owners have asked whether the Order prohibiting mass gatherings of 50 or more people applies to them. The mass gathering Order does not apply to grocery stores. It applies to one time or episodic events which could result in people gathering closely together. Nevertheless, the spirit of the order with respect to physical distancing should be followed. This means that, for example, in large grocery stores where it is feasible to have more than 50 people, while still following appropriate physical distancing, it is acceptable to have over 50 people present at one time. It is also important to ensure that physical distancing is maintained for customers who might be waiting in line (e.g., waiting to enter the store, to check out, or to pick up a product). See below for greater detail on calculating the number of people allowed in a store.

This guidance document outlines key steps to put in place for physical distancing and good hygiene practice in your premises. All the food safety and sanitation requirements for food premises continue under the *Public Health Act's* Food Premises Regulation.



Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

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

Non-medical inquiries

(ex. travel, physical distancing):

1-888-COVID19 (1888-268-4319)

or text 604-630-0300



KEY STEPS FOR OPERATORS OF RETAIL FOOD AND GROCERY STORES TO HELP PREVENT COVID-19:

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Place multiple signs near entrances informing customers of the physical distancing methods being used in your facility. This could include the number of customers the facility can accommodate inside at a time. Multiple signs help customers maintain physical distance as they read them. Consider having a store representative in place to direct customers.
- Use physical queue line controls such as crowd control cones or ropes at entrances and, where warranted, in check-out lines inside the stores.
- Place markers such as tape or cones every 2 metres to provide customers with visible cues that support physical distancing; use these in the entrance waiting line, near check-outs, and near products that draw numerous people, e.g. milk, eggs, meat. Alternatively, consider providing an attendant to support customers in high traffic areas.
- Add one-way arrows to the floor or shelving of aisles, so that customers move in one direction down aisles. This minimizes the need for customers to pass each other in aisles and makes it easier for customers to physically distance.
- Ensure customers 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.
- Allow 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 2-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.
- 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.
- To minimize physical contact between people, offer online or telephone food and grocery orders with delivery or pick up services as alternatives to shopping in person.

SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- Enhance and adhere to the premise's sanitation plan and schedule, and ensure staff are practicing proper hygiene. This includes frequent hand washing, coughing or sneezing into an elbow rather than a hand or the environment, and avoiding touching one's face.
- High sneeze guards have been installed at check-outs in many grocery stores; this best practice should be considered to protect cashiers in the stores who encounter many people.



- Ensure washrooms are always well stocked with liquid soap, paper towels and toilet paper and that warm running water is available. Antibacterial soap is not required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Post signs at each check-out indicating that the customer's own bags are not to be placed on check-out counters.
- Provide single-use containers for take-out foods and do not allow customers to use their own containers for take-out foods.
- Do NOT sell bulk items, except where staff dispense the bulk items. This does not apply to produce or bulk water
- Throughout the day, regularly monitor the condition of the bulk water dispensing system including high-touch surfaces, containers etc. and correct any issues.
- Make disinfectant wipes and trash bins available for wiping shopping carts, bulk water systems and other high-touch surfaces and for disposing of used wipes.
- Place hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol in dispensers near doors, pay stations and other high-touch locations for customer and staff use. If alcohol-based sanitizer is not available, do not substitute an alcohol-free sanitizer.
- Make disinfectant wipes and trash bins available for wiping shopping carts and disposing of used wipes.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces such as check-outs, bagging areas and carts or hand baskets, ideally between each customer and use.
- Cashiers should limit the handling of credit cards and loyalty cards wherever possible, by allowing customers to scan or tap their cards and handle the card readers themselves. Encourage tap payment over pin pad use.
- There is currently no evidence that communicable diseases, including COVID-19 can be passed on through touching or handling cash. Use of cash is important for some people who have no other way of paying for food. See <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses>
- Employees who handle cash must wash their hands with soap and water before preparing food.
- Operators and employees who choose to use gloves, must ensure thorough hand washing before and after each change of gloves. Gloves must be changed regularly. For example, gloves must be changed after visiting the toilet, eating or other activity according to store hand washing policy, and particularly after handling wet/leaking products. Hands should also be washed even when wearing gloves.
- Post signs advising customers who arrive with cold, influenza, or COVID-19 like symptoms to return home and use a delivery service instead.
- Ensure staff with cold, influenza, or COVID-19 like symptoms such as sore throat, fever, sneezing, and coughing remain at home.



CALCULATING AND MAINTAINING THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN A STORE TO SUPPORT

PHYSICAL DISTANCING:

- It is challenging to calculate the number of people that can be in a store while practicing physical distancing. Nevertheless, it is critical to evaluate how many people can reasonably be in a store and easily practice physical distancing of 2 metres between people to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- It is strongly recommended that food retail and grocery store operators have 5 square metres of unencumbered retail floor space per person, i.e. 5 square metres/person.
- This unencumbered space would be retail floor space minus floor space used for fittings, displays etc.
 - Take, for example, a store with 200 square metres of retail floor space with 70 square metres of fittings/displays. (*See end of document for example using feet.)
 - The store has 200 square metres - 70 square metres = 130 square metres of unencumbered floor space for customers.
 - Maximum number of people allowed in the store to support physical distancing would be:
(130 square metres) / (5 square metres/person) = 26 people.
- Monitor 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. Separate incoming and outgoing customer flows if possible.
- Evaluate whether people can easily practice physical distancing 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.
- Consider asking customers about their experience of physical distancing in the store and how to improve the ability to practice physical distancing within and outside the store.

GENERAL ADVICE FOR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS ABOUT COVID-19 AND FOR THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE COLD, INFLUENZA, OR FLULIKE SYMPTOMS:

- The toll-free number for non-medical information related to COVID-19, such as travel recommendations and physical distancing is 1-888-COVID19. Texts can also be sent to 604-630-0300.
- Persons experiencing cold, influenza, or COVID-19 like symptoms should self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days after symptoms begin and until symptoms, including fever, resolve.
- The BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool can be found at <https://covid19.thrive.health>. Encourage those with medical questions to call 8-1-1 and seek appropriate medical advice.



- The BC COVID-19 app is available at:
iPhone: <https://apps.apple.com/ca/app/BC-COVID-19-Support/id1502907052>
Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.bc.gov.health.hlbc.COVID19>
- For more information, see <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses>
- Employers should reassess their work environment every day and keep updated with the information posted on the Province's website: www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19

**Using the same example as above, but using feet instead of metres, a store has 2153 sq ft retail floor space with 753 sq ft of fittings/displays. The store has 2153 sq ft - 753 sq ft = 1400 sq ft of unencumbered floor space for customers. Using 53.8 sq ft of unencumbered floor space per person, the maximum number of people allowed in the store to support physical distancing would be: 1400 sq ft ÷ (53.8 sq ft/person) = 26 people.*

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