

3 March 2020

Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19

In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Hubei Province, China to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern. WHO stated there is a high risk of the 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) spreading to other countries around the world.

WHO and public health authorities around the world are taking action to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. However, long term success cannot be taken for granted. All sections of our society – including businesses and employers – must play a role if we are to stop the spread of this disease.

How COVID-19 spreads

When someone who has COVID-19 coughs or exhales they release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables or telephones. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. If they are standing within one meter of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age: people over 40 seem to be more vulnerable than those under 40. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

This document gives advice on:

1. Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace
2. How to manage COVID-19 risks when organizing meetings & events
3. Things to consider when you and your employees travel
4. Getting your workplace ready in case COVID-19 arrives in your community

1. Simple ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace

The low-cost measures below will help prevent the spread of infections in your workplace, such as colds, flu and stomach bugs, and protect your customers, contractors and employees.

Employers should start doing these things now, even if COVID-19 has not arrived in the communities where they operate. They can already reduce working days lost due to illness and stop or slow the spread of COVID-19 if it arrives at one of your workplaces.

- Make sure your workplaces are clean and hygienic

- Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, keyboards) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly
- Why? Because contamination on surfaces touched by employees and customers is one of the main ways that COVID-19 spreads
- Promote regular and thorough hand-washing by employees, contractors and customers
 - Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places around the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled
 - Display posters promoting hand-washing – ask your local public health authority for these or look on www.WHO.int.
 - Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefings at meetings and information on the intranet to promote hand-washing
 - Make sure that staff, contractors and customers have access to places where they can wash their hands with soap and water
 - Why? Because washing kills the virus on your hands and prevents the spread of COVID-19
- Promote good respiratory hygiene in the workplace
 - Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene. Combine this with other communication measures such as offering guidance from occupational health and safety officers, briefing at meetings and information on the intranet etc.
 - Ensure that face masks¹ and / or paper tissues are available at your workplaces, for those who develop a runny nose or cough at work, along with closed bins for hygienically disposing of them
 - Why? Because good respiratory hygiene prevents the spread of COVID-19
- Advise employees and contractors to consult national travel advice before going on business trips.
- Brief your employees, contractors and customers that if COVID-19 starts spreading in your community anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more) needs to stay at home. They should also stay home (or work from home) if they have had to take simple

¹ Ordinary surgical face masks rather than N95 face masks

medications, such as paracetamol/acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin, which may mask symptoms of infection

- Keep communicating and promoting the message that people need to stay at home even if they have just mild symptoms of COVID-19.
- Display posters with this message in your workplaces. Combine this with other communication channels commonly used in your organization or business.
- Your occupational health services, local public health authority or other partners may have developed campaign materials to promote this message
- Make clear to employees that they will be able to count this time off as sick leave.

2. How to manage COVID-19 risk when organizing meetings & events

Why do employers and organizers need to think about COVID-19?

Organizers of meetings and events need to think about the potential risk from COVID-19 because:

- There is a risk that people attending your meeting or event might be unwittingly bringing the COVID-19 virus to the meeting. Others might be unknowingly exposed to COVID-19.
- While COVID-19 is a mild disease for most people, it can make some very ill. Around 1 in every 5 people who catch COVID-19 needs hospital treatment.

Key considerations to prevent or reduce COVID-19 risks

BEFORE the meeting or event

- Check the advice from the authorities in the community where you plan to hold the meeting or event. Follow their advice.
- Develop and agree a preparedness plan to prevent infection at your meeting or event.
 - Consider whether a face-to-face meeting or event is needed. Could it be replaced by a teleconference or online event?
 - Could the meeting or event be scaled down so that fewer people attend?
 - Ensure and verify information and communication channels in advance with key partners such as public health and health care authorities.

- Pre-order sufficient supplies and materials, including tissues and hand sanitizer for all participants. Have surgical masks available to offer anyone who develops respiratory symptoms.
- Actively monitor where COVID-19 is circulating. Advise participants in advance that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend.
- Make sure all organizers, participants, caterers and visitors at the event provide contact details: mobile telephone number, email and address where they are staying. State clearly that their details will be shared with local public health authorities if any participant becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease. If they will not agree to this they cannot attend the event or meeting.
- Develop and agree a response plan in case someone at the meeting becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, fever, malaise). This plan should include at least:
 - Identify a room or area where someone who is feeling unwell or has symptoms can be safely isolated
 - Have a plan for how they can be safely transferred from there to a health facility.
 - Know what to do if a meeting participant, staff member or service provider tests positive for COVID-19 during or just after the meeting
 - Agree the plan in advance with your partner healthcare provider or health department.

DURING the meeting or event

- Provide information or a briefing, preferably both orally and in writing, on COVID-19 and the measures that organizers are taking to make this event safe for participants.
 - Build trust. For example, as an icebreaker, practice ways to say hello without touching.
 - Encourage regular hand-washing or use of an alcohol rub by all participants at the meeting or event
 - Encourage participants to cover their face with the bend of their elbow or a tissue if they cough or sneeze. Supply tissues and closed bins to dispose of them in.
 - Provide contact details or a health hotline number that participants can call for advice or to give information.
- Display dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub prominently around the venue.
- If there is space, arrange seats so that participants are at least one meter apart.

- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the venue is well ventilated.
- If anyone who starts to feel unwell, follow your preparedness plan or call your hotline.
 - Depending on the situation in your area, or recent travel of the participant, place the person in the isolation room. Offer the person a mask so they can get home safely, if appropriate, or to a designated assessment facility.
- Thank all participants for their cooperation with the provisions in place.

AFTER the meeting

1. Retain the names and contact details of all participants for at least one month. This will help public health authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more participants become ill shortly after the event.
2. If someone at the meeting or event was isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case, the organizer should let all participants know this. They should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.
3. If they develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate. This means avoiding close contact (1 meter or nearer) with other people, including family members. They should also telephone their healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of their recent travel and symptoms.
4. Thank all the participants for their cooperation with the provisions in place.

3. Things to consider when you and your employees travel

- **Before traveling**

- Make sure your organization and its employees have the latest information on areas where COVID-19 is spreading. You can find this at <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>
- Based on the latest information, your organization should assess the benefits and risks related to upcoming travel plans.
- Avoid sending employees who may be at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. older employees and those with medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease) to areas where COVID-19 is spreading.
- Make sure all persons travelling to locations reporting COVID-19 are briefed by a qualified professional (e.g. staff health services, health care provider or local public health partner)
- Consider issuing employees who are about to travel with small bottles (under 100 CL) of alcohol-based hand rub. This can facilitate regular hand-washing.

- **While traveling:**

- Encourage employees to wash their hands regularly and stay at least one meter away from people who are coughing or sneezing
- Ensure employees know what to do and who to contact if they feel ill while traveling.
- Ensure that your employees comply with instructions from local authorities where they are traveling. If, for example, they are told by local authorities not to go somewhere they should comply with this. Your employees should comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement or large gatherings.

- **When you or your employees return from traveling:**

- Employees who have returned from an area where COVID-19 is spreading should monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day.
- If they develop even a mild cough or low grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate. This means avoiding close contact (one meter or nearer) with other people, including family members. They should also telephone their

healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of their recent travel and symptoms.

4. Getting your workplace ready in case COVID-19 arrives in your community

- Develop a plan of what to do if someone becomes ill with suspected COVID-19 at one of your workplaces
 - The plan should cover putting the ill person in a room or area where they are isolated from others in the workplace, limiting the number of people who have contact with the sick person and contacting the local health authorities.
 - Consider how to identify persons who may be at risk, and support them, without inviting stigma and discrimination into your workplace. This could include persons who have recently travelled to an area reporting cases, or other personnel who have conditions that put them at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. diabetes, heart and lung disease, older age).
 - Tell your local public health authority you are developing the plan and seek their input.
- Promote regular teleworking across your organization. If there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community the health authorities may advise people to avoid public transport and crowded places. Teleworking will help your business keep operating while your employees stay safe.
- Develop a contingency and business continuity plan for an outbreak in the communities where your business operates
 - The plan will help prepare your organization for the possibility of an outbreak of COVID-19 in its workplaces or community. It may also be valid for other health emergencies
 - The plan should address how to keep your business running even if a significant number of employees, contractors and suppliers cannot come to your place of business - either due to local restrictions on travel or because they are ill.
 - Communicate to your employees and contractors about the plan and make sure they are aware of what they need to do – or not do – under the plan. Emphasize key points such as the importance of staying away from work even if they have only mild symptoms or have had to take simple medications (e.g. paracetamol, ibuprofen) which may mask the symptoms
 - Be sure your plan addresses the mental health and social consequences of a case of COVID-19 in the workplace or in the community and offer information and support.

- For small and medium-sized businesses without in-house staff health and welfare support, develop partnerships and plans with your local health and social service providers in advance of any emergency.
- Your local or national public health authority may be able to offer support and guidance in developing your plan.

Remember:

Now is the time to prepare for COVID-19. Simple precautions and planning can make a big difference. Action now will help protect your employees and your business.

How to stay informed:

Find the latest information from WHO on where COVID-19 is spreading:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

Advice and guidance from WHO on COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.epi-win.com/>

Food businesses

March 30, 2020

Information for grocery stores, restaurants and other food premises for employers and workers.

Update March 30, 2020: The advice below is based on current recommendations and may change. The most up-to-date information is provided in daily briefings by the PHO and Minister of Health. Please reference materials and recent news updates:

- Food and beverage sector fact sheet (TO BE UPDATED)
- [List of essential services](#)
- [PHO orders](#) (Orders must be followed in a Provincial State of Emergency)
- PDF of information on this page

For businesses

Spread of COVID-19 in the workplace

UPDATED. Will appear before items that have been updated .

Can it be transmitted through food imported from other countries?

Although COVID-19 can remain on surfaces for hours to days, it is very unlikely that the virus will survive after the length of time required for most shipping and distribution. There has been no evidence of COVID-19 being transmitted through food imported from any country, including those affected by COVID-19.

Does cooking kill COVID-19?

Cooking foods to an internal temperature of at least 74°C will inactivate COVID-19 and other bacteria in food. Always use a thermometer to check that the internal temperature of the food has reached 74°C. Following [time and temperature tables for inactivating Salmonella](#) in meat is also sufficient to inactivate COVID-19.

Are foods prepared in grocery stores, such as rotisserie chickens, allowed?

Foods that are prepared in retail stores that are individually packaged for customers are allowed. Cooking foods will inactivate COVID-19. These foods must only be handled by employees who are following established food handling procedures. Please see above for more information on cooking and food safety.

Can it be passed through handling money?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on through touching or handling money. COVID-19 is spread person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Although COVID-19 can remain on surfaces like paper money and coins, it will eventually die off. Customers and employees must use appropriate hand washing or sanitizers throughout the day, and always before eating, after using the washroom, and

before they touch their eyes, nose, and mouth (see [Hand Hygiene](#) poster). We also recommend:

- Employees who handle money must wash their hands with soap and water before preparing food.
- Dedicate employees (cashiers) to handle money and credit cards so they are segregated from preparing foods.
- Cashiers who handle money, including credit cards, must wash their hands frequently and be reminded to not touch their face.
- Gloves are an option to limit hand contact however they should be changed frequently.
- Where possible use point of sale (POS) devices that do not require customers to touch them.
- Frequently clean and disinfect POS devices.

UPDATED. Can it be passed through handling credit cards or loyalty cards? Or through touching grocery carts or payment screens?

COVID-19 is mainly spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Since it is possible the COVID-19 virus may remain on surfaces from hours to days, some spread through this route may also be occurring. Customers and employees are encouraged to use appropriate hand washing or sanitizers throughout the day, and always before eating, after using the washroom, when they arrive to work, when they arrive home and before they touch their eyes, nose, and mouth (see [Hand Hygiene](#) poster). In retail grocery stores and take-away premises customers and employees will be touching many surfaces in the store that may also have been touched by others. The use of alcohol based hand rubs and alcohol based wipes in these environments will help to remove COVID-19 from frequently touched surfaces. Stores are also asked to post signs reminding customers to wash their hands and use hand sanitizer.

Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces to at least twice daily or more if possible. This applies to these frequently touched items:

- Point of sale devices. We also recommend employees (cashiers) limit direct handling of credit cards and loyalty cards where possible and allow customers to scan them.
- Self-service scanning areas and payment touch screens.
- Handles of grocery store baskets and carts.
- Doors, railings, and common counter areas.

Can it be passed through handling take-away containers?

COVID-19 is mainly spread person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Since it is possible the COVID-19 virus may remain on surfaces from hours to days, some spread through this route may also be occurring. Employees, delivery drivers or other persons who are ill must not be involved in handling take-away containers. Practicing good hygiene through regular hand washing and sanitizers will minimize the risk with handling or touching take-away containers.

UPDATED. Should we continue to sell bulk items?

For bulk items (e.g., muffins, baking supplies, or candy) that customers can dispense themselves, including self-service beverage stations (soda, coffee, slushies):

No, you should not sell bulk items, with some exceptions. While there is no documented spread of COVID-19 through food, there is a theoretical risk that a person infected with COVID-19 could spread the virus by sneezing on food or by directly touching food with their hands. To limit hand-contact of customers to foods that are served in bulk:

- Staff are permitted to dispense bulk items from behind counters (e.g., fish counters, bakery counters).

- **All bins** that allow customers to access foods directly (e.g., muffins or bulk raisins) must be **discontinued**. Prepackaged servings are acceptable.
- Customer self-service beverage stations must be **discontinued**. Remove all beverage containers from customer service areas to behind the counter and shut-down all self-service beverage dispensers.
- Staff are permitted to pour soda, coffee and other beverages for customers. Consider switching or substituting pre-packaged (canned or bottled) beverages.

Is bulk water from coolers in grocery stores allowed?

Yes, with one major exception. Self-service by customers must be discontinued. In some communities in BC, access to bulk water purchased from grocery stores is essential. However, COVID-19 is known to survive on surfaces from hours to days, and survives the longest on plastic materials for up to 3 days. To manage the risk that may be present of COVID-19 spreading from an ill customer touching their own container or touching the bulk dispensing unit in the store, the best practice is to discontinue (stop) self-service of bulk water by customers.

Bulk water options that retailers may choose to employ must follow these requirements:

- Have pre-filled water containers available for purchase.
- Staff must not fill a customer's returned container. Customers are advised to keep their reusable containers at home until the COVID-19 outbreak is over.

UPDATED. Should customers bring their own containers for take-away food or bulk items?

What about reusable grocery bags?

COVID-19 is mainly spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Although the COVID-19 virus may remain on surfaces from hours to days, this risk of spread is probably lower. Requirements include:

- Increased cleaning and sanitizing at high touch areas where bulk foods are dispensed (see above).
- Premises must provide single use containers for take-away foods. Customers must not use their own containers for take-away food.

Reusable grocery bags

- Employees (cashiers) packaging foods may choose not to handle customer reusable grocery bags. Stores may have a policy prohibiting use of reusable bags. BCCDC and the health authorities respect the right of retail stores to make policy that works for them and their employees.
- If reusable bags are accepted at a retail store then customers may be asked to pack the bags themselves. If employees handle or pack groceries into reusable bags they are expected to practice frequent hand washing as described. Hand hygiene. Employees are reminded that gloves are not a replacement for good and frequent hand washing and hand sanitizing.

Are we allowed to let customers eat or drink outdoors in outdoor seating areas of restaurants, coffee shops or cafes?

No, outdoor table service is not allowed. Food premises are required to offer take-out service with no seating provided in outdoor areas for customers. Foods must be taken away by the customers and away from the site to minimize social gathering.

Physical Distancing

March 18th, 2020: The Provincial Medical Health Officer has ordered the closure of bars, pubs, and nightclubs.

March 20th, 2020: Restaurants and cafes are to offer take-away foods in single use containers or by delivery only.

Physical distancing: Implement physical distancing to reduce opportunities for interactions among large groups that would have prolonged close contact. Practically this might mean limiting the number of patrons who enter your business and discontinuing service in areas where physical distancing cannot be practiced (for e.g., counter service). [Poster](#)

At grocery stores

Premises must limit the number of customers entering the store and advise customers in line to maintain physical distancing. When customers are waiting in line at the check-out they must stay 2 metres away from each other. In a practical sense, this would mean an equivalent of two arms length or one large shopping cart.

Enhance your premise's sanitation plan and schedule, and ensure staff are practicing proper hygiene (e.g., frequent hand washing, as well as coughing or sneezing into your elbow rather than hands).

How can kitchen workers apply physical distancing requirements in small kitchens?

Physical distancing in busy work environments, such as kitchens may be difficult. The goal in the kitchen, as with any work-site environment, is to increase space between kitchen staff during meal preparations, and with customers during take-out and delivery services. Operators in food premises are asked to identify how this could best work in their kitchen. Physical distancing [Poster](#)

Options that meet this requirement include:

- Staggering activities in time to limit the number of staff in a confined area during the same period.
- Moving activities to another room wherever possible. Separating duties into unused dining areas could be an option for some preparation and packaging.
- Altering shift times to minimize the number of staff working in close quarters
- Using markings or dividers in the kitchen to ensure physical distancing

How do I keep safe when making deliveries of groceries or other essential items?

Volunteers and people engaged in food delivery activities must practice physical distancing and hand-washing. Contact clients before leaving the groceries or items at the door to confirm they are available to take receipt. When the item is left at the door, knock, ring or alert the client, then step back 2 metres. If required, establish a knock, drop, and go policy with the client. Alcohol hand rubs can be used to clean and disinfect hands after handling items and after touching door bells, etc.

To reduce risk among customers

- If lining up is necessary, ensure that patrons maintain social distancing (require 2 metres space between patrons)
- Ensure service areas are properly cleaned and sanitized according to the product manufacturer's instructions after each customer service, staff shift changes, and before and after closing.
- Do not provide self-serve food to patrons; have your staff serve all foods and hand out tableware or utensils to customers.
- Have separate cleaning and sanitizing equipment for customer and kitchen areas.
- Have dedicated staff for cleaning and sanitizing the service area.
- Regularly clean and disinfect equipment for handling payments.
- Provide alcohol-based hand rubs in the food premise for patrons.
- Ensure washrooms are well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels at all times, and that warm running water is available.
- Place hand hygiene and cough and sneeze etiquette signs within areas in the food premise (for example, use this [Hand Hygiene](#) poster).
- Place signage on front doors that tell guests not to enter the premises if they are feeling ill. It is recommended that they use a self-assessment tool and follow the guidelines in the tool. <https://covid19.thrive.health/>
- Encourage your patrons to use delivery or take-out options to encourage customers to avoid lining up onsite or picking up meals in person.

Sanitation

Should we review our sanitation program?

We recommend that food operators review their sanitation procedures and increase their sanitation frequency, especially for high touch surfaces and public areas.

Surfaces must be cleaned on a regular basis with an approved detergent. Cleaning removes the physical contaminants that are on a surface. This is followed by rinsing with clean, potable water. Cleaned surfaces must then be sanitized (food contact surfaces) or disinfected (non food contact surfaces). Review with your staff how to use and verify the concentration of sanitizers and disinfectants used in your food premises.

Are sanitizers different from disinfectants?

Food grade sanitizers are used after cleaning to reduce the level of bacteria to a safe level when following the manufacturer's instruction for concentration and contact time. Sanitizers are used on food contact surfaces. When sanitizers are used at the no-rinse concentration level it does not need to be rinsed off with clean potable water.

Disinfectants are different from sanitizers in that they have a greater ability to destroy bacteria, viruses and molds. Disinfectants are used at a higher concentration and require a longer contact time than sanitizers. If a food grade disinfectant is used on a food contact surface, it may need to be rinsed off with potable water.

Caution: Operators must confirm with their chemical suppliers to ensure that sanitizers or disinfectants are appropriate for use against COVID-19, and for food premises use.

What do I need to know about disinfectants?

In Canada, disinfectants must have a DIN (drug identification number). Some disinfectant/sanitizer products are the same chemical. It can be used as a disinfectant when used at a higher concentration and longer contact time or as a sanitizer when used at a lower concentration and shorter contact time. For example, "bleach" is considered a disinfectant when used at 1000 to 5000 ppm with a 10 minute contact time, but is considered a sanitizer when used at 100 to 200 ppm with a 2 minute contact time. To prepare a bleach solution consult the [FOODSAFE online bleach calculator](#).

CAUTION: Always ensure that the disinfectant you use is approved for use in a food processing or food service application. Some disinfectants can be toxic and are unsuitable for food premises or food contact surfaces:

[Canadian Drug and Health Products list of registered Sanitizers and Disinfectants.](#)

[Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2 | US EPA \(List N\)](#)

[Infection Control information on BCCDC](#)

How do I clean surfaces, linens, or clothing to reduce risk?

We recommend all food contact surfaces, such as food prep tables, kitchen, and packaging areas are cleaned and sanitized on a regular frequency. They do not need to be disinfected.

Customer service areas, dining rooms, or other areas in the restaurant or premises that are exposed frequently to the public should also be regularly cleaned and sanitized. The areas that do not have direct contact with food could also be disinfected. This is important for surfaces that are touched frequently, for example dining room tables, chairs, door knobs, or menus. It would be appropriate to disinfect any area that could be frequently touched or exposed to coughing or sneezing, for example hand-held POS (point of sale) devices or bathroom areas.

- For porous surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
 - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.
 - Otherwise, use products suitable for porous surfaces

Linens, clothing, and other items that go in the laundry

- Do not shake dirty laundry to minimize dispersing soils and particles through the air.
- Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces.

Should we perform any special cleaning and what agents should be used?

Maintaining a food safety program according to the Food Safety Act and Food Premises Regulation is vital to maintaining a hygienic and safe food business. COVID-19 is susceptible to sanitizers and disinfectants.

- Increase cleaning and disinfection frequency of high-touch surfaces and high traffic areas to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 (see above).
- Increase cleaning and sanitizing frequency of food contact surfaces.

Employee break areas

COVID-19 is spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Recent information about the spread of COVID-19 among food handlers and crew members of cruise ships is consistent with employees acquiring COVID-19 through close contact in shared employee break areas and living areas. To minimize the spread in common break areas requirements are that:

- Employees practice social distancing during break times. If possible, stagger the times employees take breaks in common areas.
- Perform more frequent cleaning and disinfecting of shared areas.



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fpinfo@bccdc.ca

Managing ill employees

- All food premises must have an updated employee illness policy that is communicated with all staff immediately.
- Tell your employees that if they are sick they must remain at home. Advise them to use the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to know when to seek healthcare. Further information can be found on the [BCCDC website](#).
- Close off all areas used by ill persons before beginning cleaning and disinfecting affected areas. All food surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized (see above),

Should my employees get tested for COVID-19?

People who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 do not need to be tested. Symptoms of COVID-19 include coughing, sneezing, sore throat, fever, and difficulty breathing. If an employee has been exposed to COVID-19 but is currently asymptomatic (not showing any signs of illness), they do not need to be tested.

Should my employees get tested for COVID-19?

As of March 12, anyone returning from international travel must self-isolate for 14 days (2 weeks) before returning to work. They do not need to be tested for COVID-19 before returning to work.

Encourage employees to self-monitor for symptoms of respiratory illness including a cough, sneeze, fever, sore throat or difficulty breathing. Tell your employees that if they are sick they must remain at home. Advise them to use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool to know when to seek healthcare. COVID-19 self-assessment tool

For food service workers

Reduce your risk of contracting COVID-19

- Ensure appropriate hand hygiene.
- Hand washing is essential to help you keep healthy, and reduces the risk of spreading microorganisms (germs) to others.
- You can pick up germs from the air when people who are sick cough or sneeze, or from surfaces where germs reside. If germs land on your hands and you touch your mouth, eyes, nose, these germs can enter your body and cause an infection.
- **For food service workers directly involved in food production**, we recommend appropriate hand washing with plain soap and water. Do not use alcohol based hand sanitizers.
- **For workers who are not involved in food production**, like cashiers and servers, we recommend appropriate hand washing with soap and water, hand sanitizer is also allowable.
- [Hand washing poster for your workplace](#)

Should we be wearing a mask at work?

No. Masks provide a protective barrier to reduce the risk of spreading viruses through droplets made by people when they cough or sneeze. Masks are not needed for people who are not experiencing any symptoms such as cough, sneeze, fever or shortness of breath. Another reason masks are not recommended are that they may cause you to touch your face more often.

Should we be using disposable gloves?

Frequent and proper handwashing is always encouraged as it is the best way of preventing all respiratory virus infections and other foodborne illnesses. If a food premises chooses to use gloves, employees must wash their hands thoroughly before putting on the gloves and change them regularly. Change the gloves before you handle money or credit card machines, and afterward. Wearing gloves does not reduce the need for hand washing. Even while wearing gloves, employees must avoid touching the face.

Other resources

- [Farmers markets](#)
- [Food banks](#)
- [Food safety for the public](#)



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

March 28, 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 sector – adjust how they operate to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19. This guidance document outlines key steps to put in place, and provides advice and help interpreting the recent public health orders.

Many retail food and grocery stores owners have asked whether or not the [Order prohibiting mass gatherings of 50 or more people](#) applies to them. While this order does not apply directly to the retail food and grocery industry, the spirit of the order 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 outside the store (ie, waiting to enter).

TO HELP PREVENT COVID-19 VIRUS TRANSMISSION, OPERATORS OF RETAIL FOOD AND GROCERY STORES SHOULD:

- Enhance 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, and avoiding touching one's face.
- Ensure the washrooms are always well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels and that warm running water is available. Antibacterial soap is not required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Provide clean carry-out bags for purchased food and grocery products. Customers should not use their own containers, reusable bags or boxes.
- Post signs at each check out indicating no customer packaging is to be used or placed on check out counters.



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



- Do NOT sell bulk items, except via gravity feed bins, or where staff dispense the bulk items.
- Place hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% ethyl alcohol in dispensers near doors, pay stations and other high-touch locations for customers and staff use.
- Use a physical queue line controls such as crowd control cordons at entrances and in check out lines outside the stores.
- Place markers such as tape or cones every 2 metres to provide customers with visible queues that support physical distancing.
- Consider placing alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers near doors, payment stations and other high-touch locations for customer and staff use, and making wipes and trash bins available for wiping shopping carts and disposing of the wipes.
- Have 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.
- Offer online or telephone food and grocery orders with delivery or pick up services as alternatives to shopping in person.
- Clean high touch surfaces such as pay stations, bagging areas and carts or hand baskets between each customer and use and encourage tap payment over pin pad use.
- Limit the handling of credit cards and loyalty cards wherever possible, by allowing customers to scan. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on to others by touching or handling cash.
- Employees who handle cash or credit card must wash their hands frequently with soap and water. This includes before any breaks, at the end of their shift, and before preparing food.
- Should operators and employees choose to use gloves, ensure thorough hand washing before and after each change of gloves.
- Ask 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 THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN A STORE:

- A good rule of thumb when calculating a maximum number of persons in a retail or grocery store at any one time is one person per 2 meters squared or 4 square meters of retail floor space.



GENERAL ADVICE FOR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS ABOUT COVID-19 AND FOR THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE COLD, INFLUENZA, OR FLU LIKE 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 questions call 8-1-1 and seek appropriate medical advice.
- Our 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

March 28, 2020
COVID-19 Guidance to Grocery Stores

