

## Considerations for Capacity Limits

Under the Provincial [COVID-19 Response Framework](#), all businesses or facilities must limit capacity so that every member of the public is able to maintain two meters of physical distancing from every other person.

To support businesses and facilities with a practical approach on how to determine their capacity limit, OPH is sharing the following considerations:

- Capacity limits need to take into account the space occupied by the person themselves and allow for movement of the person and other persons around them. They should also account for at least two meters of physical distancing not only among customers, but also staff who are present in the retail space.
- Capacity limits also need to account for fixtures in a business, as well as parameters such as narrow rooms and corridors, dead ends, narrow aisles and other obstructions, ingress (i.e., entrances), egress (i.e., exits), poorly ventilated areas, and low ceilings.
- Examine and track the customer journey throughout your facility to flag any navigation concerns/points of friction in your layout (e.g., do customers often get confused looking for specific products and dwell in certain areas leading to congregation?)
- Physical barriers (such as Plexiglas) should be used where reasonably possible, in particular in environments where physical distancing cannot take place (e.g., between a cashier and a customer).
- Also consider use of one-way walkways and workflows where appropriate, such as aisles with both ends open, to reduce the potential for and occurrence of close interaction between individuals.
- If aisles with dead ends are identified (meaning people would have to squeeze by each other to exit), consider changing the layout, adding signage that indicate the maximum number of people permitted in the aisle, or assigning employees to limit the number of people in a space at a time.
- Consider how your business will actively manage all line-ups or people congregating, and as part of considering a capacity limit, account for space needed to maintain at least two metres of physical distancing in all directions while people are in line-ups inside and outside the business (if applicable).
- If employees are assigned to manage line-ups outside your business, consider asking them to engage with customers prior to entering the store, so that products can be identified and ready at the cash.

The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) recommend a conservative approach to account for physical distancing that uses a circle with a radius of at least six (6) feet around each person. This approach accounts for instances when people might be standing along a wall or might not be standing in the centre of the circle. Under a metric system, this is equivalent to a minimum two (2) metre radius per person (which equals 12.6 square meters or 136 square feet per person). **Please be aware that such a number (area per person) cannot be used on its own since other factors (layout, obstructions) need to be taken into account.** Businesses and facilities should consider reducing maximum occupancy from this starting point to accommodate various types of floor layouts.

## FAQs

**Question:** How might I determine voluntary capacity limit for a sales floor of 500 square meters?

**Answer:** If the total walkable sales floor for customers is 500 square meters, the starting point would be to divide 500 square metres by 12.6 square metres to calculate an approximate occupancy = ~40 customers and staff. Then consider adjusting this number further, depending on fixtures or layout of the business (e.g., presence of narrow aisles, dead-end aisles, or other obstacles).

**Question:** Why is using a minimum 2 metre square (i.e., 4 square metres) NOT recommended for determining capacity limits?

**Answer:** Using 2 metres squared does not take into account the space occupied by the persons themselves (the person is assumed to be merely a point in the centre) plus it assumes that everyone is standing fixed in one spot. As such, this does not allow for any movement (i.e., no one could walk between any two people), nor could anyone shift position without everyone else having to shift position, which might be constrained by walls and objects. As such, a minimum 2-metre radius per person (i.e., 12.6 square metres) is recommended to allow shifting of each person within their area and walking (but not loitering) between people.