COVID-19 Guidance for Retail Stores – Including Grocery Stores and Pharmacies

What is COVID-19?
The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is known to cause infection in the respiratory system. Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms or may not know they have symptoms because they are similar to a cold or flu. Symptoms, including fever, cough, difficulty breathing and pneumonia, and may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. For more information about COVID-19, visit OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus.

COVID-19 is most commonly spread person-to-person, from an infected person through:
- Respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- Close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands. There is evidence to suggest that, in the right conditions, COVID-19 could survive on surfaces for several days.

Reducing the spread:
To encourage these precautions, please put up the social distancing signage provided to you, as well as the signage found on OPH’s website in different languages that address the following topics:
- Handwashing
- Hand sanitizing
- Cough etiquette and other precautions
- Practising social distancing (ideally 2 metres)

Recommendations for Retail Stores – including Grocery Stores and Pharmacies
As cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Ottawa, Ottawa Public Health (OPH) is recommending that all stores that remain open should take the following actions:

Support and encourage behaviours to reduce the spread of germs
To reduce the spread of germs, OPH recommends that everyone:
- Wash their hands often with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth unless they have just cleaned their hands
- Cover their cough and sneeze with a tissue or into their arm, not their hand
- Stay home if they are sick
- Avoid visiting people in hospitals or long-term care centres if they are sick
- Practice social distancing (2 metres or 6 feet apart)
**Ensure Social Distancing**

The practice of social distancing promotes everyone keeping a 2 metre (6 feet) distance from each other. In order to ensure social distancing, the following steps should be taken:

- Increase the space between employees and patrons at counters by using screens or barriers.
- Limit the number of occupants, including staff, in the store to allow for the maintenance of a 2 metre (6 foot) social distance.
  - Ensure line management practices that requires 2 meters (6 feet) social distancing for any patrons waiting outside to enter the store.
- Consider placing markers on the floor at check-out aisles to ensure customers maintain a 2 metre (6 foot) distance from one another.
- Close any seated, dine-in area that may be in the store.
- No sampling product stations should be permitted.

**Consider vulnerable populations**

- Some businesses have begun a practice where they have dedicated the first hour of operation for customers from vulnerable populations, for customers over 65, or for those with a compromised immune system.
- Other practices for consideration include offering a pre-order/pick-up/delivery model to limit interactions. OPH has guidelines for these measures on our [website](http://example.org).

**Take extra precautions to clean and disinfect surfaces as often as possible**

OPH recommends that grocery stores complete the following enhanced cleaning practices to support infection prevention and control, as COVID-19 is spread by droplets:

- Remember to clean surfaces first, then disinfect them.
- Consider disinfecting shopping carts as frequently as possible.
- Ensure an adequate supply of water, soap, paper towels for cleaning and disinfectants for sanitizing.
- Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces at a minimum of twice a day (doorknobs, hand railing, light switches, etc.) and/or as they become visibly soiled.
- Use an appropriate cleaner and disinfectant, as per manufacturer’s instructions.
- Remove items that are hard to clean and disinfect.

For more information on cleaning and disinfecting, please consult OPH’s [cleaning and disinfection checklist](http://example.org) as well as the Public Health Ontario [guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting non-healthcare settings](http://example.org).

**Provide patrons access to hand hygiene stations and supplies**

- Ensure that patrons have easy access to handwashing stations, hand sanitizer and washrooms.
- Encourage patrons to wash their hands properly and frequently.
Transactions
• If possible, encourage patrons to pay by debit or credit card (tap if possible) and have staff wipe the machine and use hand sanitizer immediately after each interaction.
• Staff may choose to wear gloves. If they do so, they should practice proper glove use (see below).
• All cashiers should have hand sanitizer at their cashes, if possible.

Practice proper glove use
Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene, as they do not guarantee that food or surface are not contaminated. Gloves should always be worn when a staff member has a break in their skin or has a bandage that is covering a wound.
In the event you are wearing gloves, do so properly.
• Gloves must be used in combination with handwashing.
• Hands should always be washed and/or sanitized prior to putting on gloves and after taking gloves off.
• Change gloves whenever you change an activity, touch your face, or come into contact with an item that may have germs.
• Gloves should be thrown out and not used again once they have been taken off.

Supporting each other and our community
We understand that this is a challenging time, but measures like this are needed to ensure that the spread of COVID-19 in our community is limited. We thank you for the service that you provide to our community.