



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](#).

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](#) as well as the Public Health Ontario [guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting non-healthcare settings](#).

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.