

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Guidance for Retail Settings

## COVID-19: Public Health Guidance for Retail Settings

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### Key Points

- In Step 1 of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#), essential retail is permitted to operate at 25% capacity, while all other non-essential retail is permitted at 15% capacity. Retail stores in malls are closed unless they have a street facing entrance or are specifically permitted to remain open in Schedule 7 of [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#).
- Staff must be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 before each shift and reminded to stay home and get tested if they are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- All staff and patrons must wear a face covering when in the indoor area of a business or organization.
- Physical distancing of two metres must be maintained at all times and should be encouraged through limiting capacity, one-way traffic flow/directional arrows, and signage.
- Clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces frequently (door handles, countertops).

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Southwestern Public Health website (<https://www.swpublichealth.ca/>) regularly for updates and announcements. This guidance is to support owners/operators on how to keep retail settings operating safely and includes mandated restrictions and capacity limits in place in Step 1 of Ontario's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). Timelines for the start of each step of the roadmap are subject to change based on provincial direction.

### COVID-19 Roadmap to Reopen

Retail settings must follow the requirements outlined in Ontario's Roadmap to Reopen. The below chart provides an overview of restrictions in place in each step of the Roadmap. More details on the specific requirements in Step 2 and Step 3 are pending the release of the associated regulations.

Step in Roadmap	Requirements
General Public Health Measures for	✓ Workplaces must screen all workers and essential visitors entering the work environment. See the <a href="#">COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces</a> for more information.

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<p><b>all Businesses and Organizations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Personal Protective Equipment that protects the eyes, nose and mouth is required if a worker is required to come within 2 metres of someone who is not wearing a face covering and is not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.</li> <li>✓ All businesses or facilities must limit capacity so that every member of the public can maintain 2 metres of physical distance from every other person.</li> <li>✓ All businesses or organizations must <b>post signs</b> at all entrances to the premises in a conspicuous location visible to the public that inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 prior to entering the premises.</li> <li>✓ Businesses or places that are open shall ensure that equipment, washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms and showers that are accessible to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.</li> <li>✓ Face coverings are required to be worn by members of the public and workers in indoor public places and workplaces, with limited <b>exceptions</b>.</li> <li>✓ All workplaces must develop a <b>COVID-19 workplace safety plan</b> and have it available should an inspector or compliance officer request to see it during an inspection.</li> <li>✓ The venue must manage line-ups and patrons congregating. Patrons lining up must maintain physical distance of 2 metres and if the line up is inside the business than face coverings are also required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 1</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Essential retail at 25% capacity and can sell all goods (including discount and big box stores)</li> <li>✓ Non-essential retail at 15% capacity</li> <li>✓ Retail stores in malls closed unless the stores have a street facing entrance or are permitted to open as per schedule 7 of <b>Ontario Regulation 82/20</b></li> <li>✓ Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 2</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Essential retail at 50% capacity</li> <li>✓ Non-essential retail at 25% capacity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 3</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Essential and non-essential retail open with capacity limited to permit physical distancing of 2 metres</li> </ul>

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## Guidance for Step One of the Roadmap to Reopen

### General Restrictions

- A safety plan must be prepared and available upon request. Information on how to create a safety plan is [found here](#).
  - The safety plan should describe the measures and procedures implemented to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. It should include information on screening, face coverings, physical distancing, use of personal protective equipment and cleaning and disinfection.
  - A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous place.
- The owner/operator, or another person appointed for that purpose, should be present and checking to ensure adherence to public health protocols.
- Passive screening of patrons is required (e.g., posting a [sign](#) at the entrance about not entering if you have COVID-19 symptoms).
- Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.

### Specific Requirements for Malls

- In Step 1, only essential retailers within shopping malls or businesses that have a public entrance that opens onto a street or exterior sidewalk may open for in-person retail sales to the public. As per Ontario Regulation 82/20, some exceptions apply for select businesses such as pharmacies, optical stores and telecommunication providers.
- Members of the public can only enter the shopping mall to access a business that is permitted to be open or to access a pick up point within the mall. Loitering in shopping malls by members of the public is not permitted.
- If a business or place in the shopping mall has a public entrance that opens onto a street or exterior sidewalk, members of the public can only enter and exit through this entrance and cannot enter or exit through any entrance that opens directly into the shopping mall.
- All interior dining spaces, including tables and seating in food courts, must be closed.
- Music played in the facility cannot exceed the decibel level at which normal conversation is possible.
- Indoor shopping malls are required to screen patrons in accordance with [instructions issued by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health](#) (active screening) before they enter the indoor premises of the mall.
- Businesses within the mall that are not permitted to open for in-person retail sales may open for curbside pick-up or delivery or permitting patrons to pick up items at a designated location in the mall.

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- A shopping mall may establish a single location inside the mall or any number of designated locations outside the shopping mall for the purpose of allowing patrons to pick up an order from a business inside the mall. Patrons must have a prior appointment and the item must have been ordered before the patron arrived at the business premises.

## Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment

- The Province of Ontario has mandated face coverings in indoor areas of businesses or organizations. Certain exemptions apply. See Schedule 6 section 2(5) of [O. Reg 82/20](#) for more information.
  - Face coverings can be temporarily removed while eating and drinking.
  - Staff working in indoor areas accessible only to employees who can physically distance (at least 2 metres) from all other staff members in that space do not need to wear a face covering while in this area.
- Personal protective equipment covering the eyes, mouth and nose is required when a worker must come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a face covering (i.e. because they state an exemption). At a minimum, this would include a **medical mask and eye protection** (face shield or goggles). If a plexiglass or impermeable barrier separates the worker from the person not wearing a face covering, additional PPE is not mandatory (but a face covering is still required).
- Southwestern Public Health strongly recommends that eye protection be worn by employees whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. See our [Eye Protection Guidelines](#) for more information.
- Face coverings are required when congregating or lining up outside the venue.
- Employers should:
  - Have a policy in place outlining how the provincial face covering requirements will be implemented as per the [Southwestern Public Health Letter of Instruction](#).
  - Provide staff with a sufficient supply of face coverings.
  - Consider having a supply of face coverings for customers.
  - Train staff on implementing the provincial face covering regulation, including how to manage individuals claiming exemptions.
  - Provide all staff with information on [proper use, removal, and washing of face coverings](#).
  - Post [signs](#) at entrances to remind customers of [face covering requirements](#).

## Physical Distancing and Capacity Requirements

- The number of people in the store must be limited to allow for physical distancing.
- Specific capacity limits apply in Step 1:
  - For essential retailers the capacity limit is 25%

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- Including supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, indoor farmers markets, pharmacies, big box and discount stores selling groceries.
- See [Regulation 82/20](#) Schedule 7 Section 2 for more information on other businesses considered essential retailers.
- To calculate 25% capacity, use the following formula: Total square metres of floor area (accessible to the public, not including shelving and store fixtures) ÷ 16. Round number down to nearest whole number.
  - For non-essential retailers the capacity limit is 15%
    - To calculate 15% capacity: Total square metres of floor area (accessible to the public, not including shelving and store fixtures) ÷ 26.67. Round number down to nearest whole number.
- Signage must be posted in a location visible to the public indicating the store's capacity.
- Walk through the store to identify areas needing adjustments to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Monitor entrances to control staff and patrons who are entering the store.
- Rearrange store layout and remove non-essential furniture/items, to allow ease of movement for physical distancing.
- Maintain a two-metre distance from patrons when providing assistance.
- Ensure customers maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from others.
- Consider creating a one-way flow of traffic throughout the space to facilitate physical distancing.
  - Where possible, create separate entrance and exit points.
  - Allow enough space for staff movement.
- Venues are responsible for ensuring patrons lining up or congregating outside the venue maintain a physical distance of 2 metres. If line ups occur inside the business, patrons must maintain physical distance of 2 metres and wear a face covering.
- At checkout:
  - Consider installing plexiglass or other physical barriers where physical distancing cannot be maintained (i.e. at checkouts).
    - To be effective, the barrier must be large enough to create a shield between the people's breathing zones on either side.
    - View our [Guidance on Physical Barriers](#) for more information.
  - Use every other check out station if less than two metres/six feet apart.
  - Place visual/textural markers (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) spaced two metres/six feet apart for patrons lining up when waiting to cash-out.
- Consider stocking shelves and arranging product displays when the store is closed to patrons. Where stocking or product display arrangements are needed during operating hours, define safe practices for workers. Consider closing aisles while restocking or using signs to remind patrons to stay two metres/six feet apart.

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## Signage

- Post a [sign](#) at the entrance reminding customers who are sick to delay their visit.
- Post a [sign](#) at the entrance indicating that all persons in the the store must wear a face covering. You may also wish to post [this sign](#) regarding face covering exemptions.
- Post simple signage to communicate to customers the safety precautions and physical distancing measures that are being taken.
- Consider directional arrows to indicate flow or setting up tape or ropes to organize potential line ups, respecting physical distancing.

## Cleaning and Disinfection

- Provide hand sanitizer with 60-90% alcohol concentration in dispensers outside the store entrance, particularly near high-touch services such as bank machines, touch-screen signs, elevators, escalators and stair railings.
- Encourage everyone to use hand sanitizer when they enter.
- Clean and sanitize high-touch surfaces frequently (door handles, countertops).
  - Wipe down the debit machine between customers with a disinfectant/sanitizer.
- Workers should wash their hands before and after stocking/rearranging shelves or product displays.
- [Washrooms](#) available for customer use must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.
- Shopping carts and baskets must be sanitized between each patron. Those which cannot be easily sanitized should not be provided (e.g. cloth bags).
- Remove soft/porous items that are difficult to sanitize, such as upholstery, cushions and rugs.
- Use tap features at checkout instead of cash, where possible.

## Staff

- Screening employees for COVID-19 is currently mandatory. Please see the [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Workplaces](#) for more information. Ensure all staff complete screening before each shift and do not attend work while sick. **Before each shift, staff must be screened** to identify if they:
  - Have [symptoms of COVID-19](#) such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
  - Have had contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days.
  - Have been instructed by public health to self-isolate due to travel or contact history.**Any staff member that answers "yes" to any of these conditions must be sent home and advised to contact their local public health unit.**
- Staff should be reminded to stay home if they are sick. If an employee becomes ill with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) while at work, they must go home right away to [self-isolate](#) and contact their health care provider or an [Assessment Centre](#) to get tested.

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- Workers with a household member who has symptoms and awaiting COVID-19 test results should self-isolate and not attend work until results are known. If the household members' results are positive, the worker must self-isolate as directed by public health. For more information, visit the [Self-Isolating section of our website](#).
- Work in a manner that facilitates physical distancing between staff members and patrons as best as possible.
  - Encourage staff to maintain physical distancing (2 metres or 6 feet) from other staff and customers.
  - Assign staff to specific tasks to minimize contact between them.
- When workers remove their face covering temporarily to consume food or drink (i.e. on lunch break) they must be separated by others by at least 2 metres or by plexiglass or other impermeable barrier.
- Train staff on the proper use of gloves and face coverings. Gloves are not required, but if used, they must be changed between tasks and frequently, with handwashing between uses.
- Encourage frequent handwashing using the [correct technique](#) and avoid touching one's face with unwashed hands.
- Practice safe respiratory etiquette (i.e. cough or sneeze into a bent elbow, and immediately wash your hands with soap and water).

## Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. Avoid recirculating air.
- Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
  - Seating and activities should be arranged away from high airflow areas (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- Rooms, where indoor ceiling fans are used, should have an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, limit air blowing across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.

## Additional Resources

- [Government of Canada Advice for Retailers during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- [Regulation 82/20 – Restrictions in Step 1](#)

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Southwestern Public Health  
1-800-922-0096  
[www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca)

