

GUIDANCE FOR GROCERY STORES

Overview

Under current Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders, businesses and entities are required to:

- implement practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees;
- provide procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- ensure that attendees maintain high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene;
- comply, to the extent possible, with the [COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance](#), this guidance, and any other applicable Alberta Health guidance found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>.

This document has been developed to support grocery stores in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among attendees (including workers, volunteers, patrons and the general public). The guidance provided outlines public health and infection prevention and control measures, specific to this setting.

This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed. Current information related to COVID-19 can be found: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information.aspx>.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Public Areas & Common Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure patrons are aware of store rules by posting signs, available online, in high-visibility locations, including signs that outline:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ physical distancing requirements (2 metres)○ prohibitions on attendance by sick or isolating patrons○ hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette○ cleaning and disinfection practices○ store rules, for example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ capacity and/or shopping hours,▪ any limits on the number of shoppers per household, and▪ restrictions around personal items (reusable bags, to-go cups or travel mugs).• Encourage patrons to download the ABTraceTogether app to help let them know if they've been exposed to COVID-19.• Provide a hand washing station with soap and paper towels or hand sanitizer, with at least 60% alcohol content, at entrances and exits.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider staggering worker arrival/departure times, lunchtimes, breaks and meetings to minimize the number of workers in one place.• If uniforms are provided, ensure that are laundered by a laundry service provider or encourage workers to workers to wash their work clothes as soon as possible after shift.• Staff are permitted to wear non-medical face masks if preferred, even if a mask is not necessary for the work they are performing. Guidance is available online.• Ensure staff are trained on hygiene, sanitation and any updated policies or procedures related to preventing transmission of COVID-19.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure staff have access to hand sanitizer, as required.• Continue to follow existing occupational health and safety (OHS) requirements.• Designate lockers, storage spaces or tools for each worker.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If tools or equipment must be shared, ensure they are cleaned and disinfected after each user.• Set up delivery or loading bay procedures that support physical distancing as well as enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices.• A rapid response plan sets out a fast-action plan for businesses when an attendee shows symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19.• Staff members should be familiar with and follow the grocery store’s rapid response plan if a staff member starts feeling symptoms during a shift. This should include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Immediately isolating the attendee from others.○ Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces that may have come into contact with the symptomatic attendee.○ Requiring hand hygiene and masking of the attendee.○ The attendee must isolate as soon as possible.
<p>General Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider implementing active screening of attendees (where applicable) and staff for symptoms of fever, sore throat, cough, runny nose or difficulty breathing.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Operators may choose to use Alberta Health Daily Checklist.○ The Alberta Health Services COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool can be used by attendees.• Operators should make every effort to encourage respiratory etiquette (e.g., coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow, promptly disposing of used tissues in a lined garbage bin) is followed.• Shift stocking activities to off-peak or after hours, when possible, to reduce staff contact with customers.• The use of highly visible posters that remind attendees to practice respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene is strongly encouraged (e.g., entrances, washrooms and staff rooms).• Notify attendees of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ COVID-19 signage should be posted in highly visible locations:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ “Help prevent the spread” posters are available.▪ When possible, provide necessary information in languages that are preferred by attendees.• To support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that a staff member or client tests positive, operators should consider collecting the names and contact information of clients and staff on shift.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing information is voluntary for clients. An organization must obtain an individual's consent and notify them about the purpose and legal authority for the collection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any personal information that is collected for COVID-19 contact tracing can only be used for this purpose • Information about clients will only be requested by Alberta Health Services if a potential exposure occurs onsite. • Records should only be kept for 2 weeks. An organization must make reasonable security arrangements to protect the personal information. • For more information, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has released Pandemic FAQ: Customer Lists about collecting personal information from customers during the COVID-19 pandemic. • For questions about your obligations under the <i>Protection of Personal Information Act</i> (PIPA), please contact the FOIP-PIPA Help Desk by phone at 780-427-5848 or by email at sa.accessandprivacy@gov.ab.ca. • Food service providers within grocery stores are required to follow the Food Regulation and Food Retail and Foodservices Code and existing occupational health and safety requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Operators should also follow the COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance and the Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs, and Bars Guidance
<p>Physical Distancing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider physical controls to support spacing of at least 2 metres or physical barriers to prevent direct contact between attendees. These types of controls reduce the opportunity for transmission. Operators should consider the following examples and implement appropriate controls for their settings and services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Placing barriers or partitions between attendees. ○ Reducing or removing seats from waiting areas, lunch rooms and dining areas. ○ Re-arranging lockers and workspaces. ○ Closing toilets or urinals that are less than 2 metres apart without barriers between them. Washroom capacity must allow for protection of guests. For example, consider or installing barriers between urinals or close off every second urinal. ○ Placing additional hands-free garbage bins with removable linings at all entrances and exits. • Where physical controls are not possible or appropriate, the operator should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reducing the number of attendees at one time. ○ Support vulnerable populations with access to dedicated store hours, delivery or curbside pickup. Choose times at the start of the day, when the store is freshly cleaned, for these customers. ○ Encourage curbside pickup for online purchases.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Directing traffic flow within a site. This can be accomplished with signs, ropes, floor decals, etc. ○ Dedicated entry and exit points. ○ Encourage patrons to exit the business as quickly as possible following their purchase or completion of their visit. ○ Making announcements at regular intervals over store speaker. ○ Employing staff to facilitate physical distancing throughout the store and line ups. ○ If possible, notify customers of store rules in advance through updated websites or by email. Setting expectations in advance can facilitate compliance with the rules and reduce the likelihood of disputes about the rules at the store. ● Develop strategies to minimize the handling of objects between multiple attendees and ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of these objects. If an items is shared between attendees, attendees should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol before and after handling a shared item. ○ Hard-surfaced items, or items which can be laundered should be cleaned and disinfected. ○ Soft-surface items, or other items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected should be isolated for a period of 24 hours.
<p>Purchases</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take precautions at the point of sale to reduce transmission. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physically distancing cashiers from patrons or installing physical barriers. ○ Creating markers to indicate where shoppers should stand while waiting in line to maintain physical distance. ○ Spacing out cash counters and self-service check-outs, when possible. ● Cashiers should sanitize their work space and clean their hands often. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pay extra attention to sanitizing surfaces touched by the customer, such as touchscreens or payment keypads. ○ Follow store procedures if customers are using their own reusable shopping bags or bins. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have the customers keep their bags or bins in their cart and pack their own groceries. ▪ Cashiers should clean their hands if they touch the customer’s bags or bins. ● Encourage customers to use debit or credit cards and touchless payment when it is possible. If cash must be accepted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designate specific terminals for cash payments. ○ Ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ cash is securely stored and minimally handled, and

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ all workers who handle it wash and/or sanitize their hands immediately afterwards. • Discourage customers from touching goods. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Posting 'Please buy what you touch' signs throughout the store. ○ Limiting the amount of stock on shelves at a given time. ○ Letting customers know to ask for items if a shelf is empty but the item is not marked as out-of-stock. ○ Removing items and areas that can't be easily cleaned, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ newspapers, magazines and flyers, ▪ demo or sample stations, and ▪ snack bars or complimentary food and beverage stations. ○ Displaying product information, such as package contents with product. • Update return policies to prevent the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to attendees. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Eliminating the opportunity to return purchased goods (i.e. final sale only). ○ Cleaning and disinfecting hard-surfaced, returned good prior to placing them back onto the sales floor. • Storing soft-surface items for a period of 24 hours prior to resale.
<p>Self-Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulk items should be dispensed by staff from behind counters (e.g., meat, deli, bakery counters). • Bulk items may also be sold in prepackaged servings (such as dried goods, candies). • Gravity feed bins may be used but should be cleaned and disinfected frequently. • Water fountains may remain open and should be cleaned and disinfected frequently. • Self-service, ready-to-eat food (such as soup counters, olive bars, beverage stations) must be provided in accordance with the Restaurants, Cafes, Pubs, and Bars Guidance.
<p>Cleaning and disinfecting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces as per AHS' Advice for Grocery Stores/Related Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic • Grocery stores should follow cleaning and disinfecting practices described in the COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance, and should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Keep a log of daily cleaning. ○ Regularly clean and disinfect any surfaces and equipment touched by attendees. ○ Frequently sanitize washrooms. ○ Clean and disinfect carts, baskets and checkouts (self-serve or staffed) after each use. Have a clearly designated drop off area for used carts and baskets.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep washrooms (staff and public) clean and well-stocked with soap and paper towels.• Provide ample waste disposal options in both public and staff-only areas of the store.• Line waste containers with plastic bags for safer garbage disposal.• Consider reducing store hours or scheduling closure days to deep clean the entire store.• Use disposable gloves when performing higher risk activities such handling garbage or using disinfectants to clean carts and baskets.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Make sure workers are properly trained on the safe use and disposal of gloves, including how to put them on and take them off safely. |
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