

Phase Two Guidance

Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19): Guidance for Grocery Stores and Farmers Markets

During Phase Two, the public and businesses will be required to adopt new behaviors and rigorous safeguards to reduce risk for all. This guidance is intended for food retailers (including grocery stores and farmers markets) during Phase Two. If providing services, **the following measures should be implemented to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst employees, customers, and the community.** For additional information, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/phasetwo.

Please note that any individual experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or was recently exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, should not work in or visit a food retailer due to the risk of exposing others. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include: fever (subjective or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit), chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or otherwise feeling unwell.

Phase Two General Information

- **Mask, queuing, and capacity rules previously established for essential businesses such as grocery stores are unchanged in Phase Two.**
- **Grocery stores may reopen buffets if staff serves the food (no self-service is permitted).**
- **Farmers Markets must maintain spacing between individual vendors of at least 6 feet apart.**

Employees and Customers Should Practice Everyday Prevention Measures

- Stay home if you are sick or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- Stay at least 6 feet from other people who are not from the same household when possible.
- Employees and customers should wear a cloth face covering at all times.
- Employees should wear disposable gloves to minimize bare hand contact with any food products, and per routine job responsibilities.
- Perform frequent hand hygiene (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
 - Key times to perform hand hygiene include:
 - Before, during, and after preparing, serving or eating food,
 - After using the toilet,
 - Before and after putting on, touching, or removing cloth face coverings,
 - Before and after work shifts and work breaks,
 - Before and after services to each client,
 - After handling another person's belongings, and
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Considerations for the Public

- Continue to order food and other items online for home delivery or curbside pickup when possible.
- Only visit the grocery store, or other food retailers, in person when you absolutely need to. This will limit your potential exposure to others and the virus that causes COVID-19
- When you do have to visit in person, go during hours when fewer people will be there (for example, early morning or late night).
- Customers should minimize time in the store, and shop alone or only with members of the same household.
- If you are at higher risk for severe illness, find out if the store has special hours for people at higher risk. If they do, try to shop during those hours. People at higher risk for severe illness include adults 65 or older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions.

- Disinfect the shopping cart, use disinfecting wipes if available.
- There is no evidence that food or food packaging play a significant role in spreading the virus in the United States.
- For additional information see [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/essential-goods-services.html)

Employer Considerations to Encourage Employee and Patron Safety

- Arrange workstations, common areas, break rooms and other areas of the facility to ensure at least 6 feet between people.
- Post signage stating that no one with a fever or symptoms of COVID-19 is permitted to enter the facility and that all individuals must wear a mask or face covering
- Provide employees with access to soap, clean running water, and materials for drying their hands, and provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol at stations around the establishment for use by both workers and customers.
- Hand sanitizer must be made easily accessible at the entrance of every establishment
- Provide staff with appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., masks, gloves) and cloth face coverings.
- Inform and remind third-party delivery drivers and any suppliers about social distancing, face covering and hand hygiene requirements.
- Stagger shifts, start times, and break times as much as possible.
- Implement leave policies that are flexible and non-punitive, and allow sick employees to stay home. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
- Educate employees about COVID-19. Refer to [coronavirus.dc.gov/](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/) for more information.
- **For additional information specific to retail food establishments**, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC)website: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/grocery-food-retail-workers.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/grocery-food-retail-workers.html)

Avoid Close Contact and Reduce Touchpoints

- If possible, have a separate entrance and exit for the establishment to allow one-way flow of patrons.
- When possible, close aisles while they are being restocked.
- Provide physical guides, such as tape on floors and sidewalks and signage, to ensure that individuals remain at least 6 feet apart in queuing areas, both inside and outside the building.
- Where possible, mark paths and require aisles to be one-way.
- Inform customers to fill their own reusable bags or bags provided by the retailer.
- Hand-shaking and other person-to-person contact between employees or with customers should be discouraged in the workplace

Screening and Monitoring for Symptoms

- Perform screening (e.g., symptom questionnaires) of employees daily, prior to entering the business, over the phone or in person.
- Employees who report symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19 should not enter the business.
- If an employee develops any symptoms of COVID-19 during the workday, there should be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and leave the building.

Clean and Disinfect/Sanitation

- Clean and sanitize work surfaces, including self-checkout, at least once every hour.
- Clean and disinfect other high-touch surfaces, including those located in break rooms, bathrooms,

and administrative areas, as well as refrigerator and freezer door handles, at least once every 2 hours.

- Clean and disinfect carts and baskets at least once every hour.
- Clean and sanitize all equipment and utensils between employees' use of them and changes in tasks.
- Restrooms must be cleaned and disinfected frequently and appropriately marked and monitored to ensure social distancing guidelines are followed. Ensure an adequate supply of soap and paper towels is present at all times.
- All food preparation contact surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized at least once every 2 hours.
- For more information about disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19, see the CDC website [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html).

Building Considerations

- If the building was closed for an extended period of time, remember to check HVAC systems and ensure all water systems are safe to use. For more information, see CDC's Guidance for Reopening Buildings after Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation: [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/building-water-system.html).

Establish a Plan for COVID-19 Exposure

- Establish a plan in the event that an employee or customer is diagnosed with COVID-19.
- Identify a point of contact at the establishment that an employee can notify if they test positive for COVID-19 and choose to disclose this information.
- If an employee chooses to report to the establishment that they are positive for COVID-19, the establishment should have a notification process to share the following with staff:
 - Education about COVID-19, including the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
 - Referral to the Guidance for Contacts of a Person Confirmed to have COVID-19, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov)
 - Information on options for COVID-19 testing in the District of Columbia, available at [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/testing)
- If an employee notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19 **AND** the employee had extensive contact with customers **OR** if a customer notifies the establishment they tested positive for COVID-19, then the establishment should notify DC Health by emailing coronavirus@dc.gov with the following information:
 - "COVID-19 Consult" in the email subject line
 - Name and direct phone number of the best point of contact at the establishment for DC Health to return the call
 - Estimated number of customers potentially exposed
 - Short summary of incident/situation
- An investigator from DC Health will follow-up within 48 hours to all appropriately submitted email inquiries

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit [coronavirus.dc.gov](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov) regularly for the most current information.