

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

During Phase Two, the public and businesses must adopt 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 must 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, must 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.

UPDATE: Mayor's Order 2020-127

- [Mayor's Order 2020-127](#), issued December 18, 2020, establishes temporary pauses in various activities from 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 23, 2020, until 5:00 a.m. on Friday, January 15, 2021, including immediately adjusting Mayor's Order 2020-126 so as to remove the percentage capacity and numeric caps on retail food sellers; and extends the Public Emergency and Public Health Emergency.
- The pauses imposed by Section III of Mayor's Order 2020-127 are time limited and all other regulations affecting those sectors remain in place and are not superseded. This Order supersedes any Mayor's Order issued during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency only to the extent of any inconsistency.

Phase Two General Information

- **Starting December 23, food retailers are not limited to a specific capacity or numerical cap on individuals who may be inside the business. However, they must keep strong safeguards in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Occupancy levels must be limited to ensure that 6 feet of social distancing is able to be maintained between anyone who is inside the business.**
- Grocery stores may operate 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 Must Practice Everyday Prevention Measures

- **Stay home if you feel unwell** or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **Practice social distancing.** Stay at least 6 feet from other people who are not from the same household.
- **Wear a cloth face covering or facemask at all times** (employees and customers).
 - Masks and cloth face coverings protect the wearer and protect other people.
- Employees must 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 must minimize time in the store and must 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

- Employers must arrange workstations, common areas, break rooms and other areas of the facility to ensure at least 6 feet between staff.
- Signage must be posted at entrance 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.
- Employers must 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.
- Employers must provide staff with appropriate personal protective equipment (e.g., masks, gloves) and cloth face coverings.
- Employers must inform and remind third-party delivery drivers and any suppliers about social distancing, face covering and hand hygiene requirements.
- Employers must stagger shifts, start times, and break times as much as possible.
- Implement leave policies that are flexible and non-punitive, and that allow sick employees to stay home. Leave policies are recommended to account for the following:
 - Employees who report COVID-19 symptoms,
 - Employees who were tested for COVID-19 and test results are pending,
 - Employees who tested positive for COVID-19,
 - Employees who are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19
 - Employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members
- Keep abreast of current law, which has amended both the DC Family and Medical Leave Act and the DC Sick and Safe Leave Law and created whole new categories of leave, like Declared Emergency Leave.
- Learn about and inform your employees about COVID-related leave provided through new federal law, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) and all applicable District law relating to sick leave.
- Employers must educate employees about COVID-19. Refer to 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.
- Close aisles while they are being restocked, to the greatest extent possible.
- 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.
- Mark paths and require aisles to be one-way, wherever possible.
- Require 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 must be discouraged in the workplace.

Screening and Monitoring for Symptoms

- Employers must screen employees daily (e.g., symptom questionnaires), prior to entering the business, over the phone or in person.
 - For **Screening Tool Guidance**, visit coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance
- Employees who report symptoms or testing positive for COVID-19 must not enter the business.
- If an employee develops any symptoms of COVID-19 during the workday, there must be a plan in place for that individual to immediately isolate, notify their supervisor, and leave the building.

Clean and Disinfect/Sanitation

- Work surfaces, including self-checkout, must be cleaned and sanitized at least once every hour.
- High-touch surfaces, including those located in break rooms, bathrooms, and administrative areas, including refrigerator and freezer door handles, must be cleaned and disinfected at least once every 2 hours.
- Carts and baskets must be cleaned and disinfected at least once every hour.
- All equipment and utensils must be cleaned and sanitized 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

Building Considerations

- Consider making the following improvements to improve building ventilation (cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response):
 - Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors.
 - Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling, triggering asthma symptoms).
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and provide acceptable indoor air quality for the current occupancy level for each space.
 - Improve central air filtration to the highest compatible with the filter rack, and seal edges of the filter to limit bypass.
 - Increase ventilation rates.
 - Check filters to ensure they are within service life and appropriately installed.
 - Keep systems running longer hours, 24/7 if possible, to enhance air exchanges in the building space.

- Consult with a specialist to see what works for your building if activities are indoors, increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows or exterior doors if possible.
- 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 must 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 [coronavirus.dc.gov/testing](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/testing)
- Refer to the guidance "*First Steps for Non-Healthcare Employers when Employees Test Positive for COVID-19*" at [coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance](https://www.coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance)
 - A close contact is someone who was within 6 feet of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes over a 24-hour period, during that person's infectious period.
 - The infectious period starts two days before symptom onset and typically ends 10 days after symptom onset (or test date for people who do not have symptoms).
- Establishments must notify DC Health when:
 - An employee notifies the establishment they **tested positive for COVID-19** (not before results come back)
 - AND**
 - The person was in the building **during their infectious period**.
- Notify DC Health by submitting an online form on the DC Health COVID-19 Reporting Requirements website dchealth.dc.gov/page/covid-19-reporting-requirements:
 - Submit a **Non-Healthcare Facility COVID-19 Consult Form**.
- An investigator from DC Health will follow up within 48 hours to all appropriately submitted inquiries. Please note this time may increase as cases of COVID-19 increase in the District.

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.