

Recommended Guidance for Preventing Spread of COVID-19 in Grocery Stores

I. **Background**

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about SARS-CoV-2, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (those within about six feet) via respiratory droplets. Transmission of SAR-CoV-2 to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented yet, but current evidence suggests that SARS-CoV-2 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of material.

II. **Purpose**

This guidance provides recommendations for grocery stores in Illinois.

III. **Preventative Actions for Grocery Stores**

Grocery stores can play an important role in protecting their employees and customers from COVID-19 infections by following personal and environmental hygiene practices. The following industry best practices can be employed to keep employees and customers safe during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Post a sign(s) at the entrance(s) and throughout the store alerting customers that they must follow the 6ft separation rule;
- Post sign(s) for customers and employees alerting them of efforts in place regarding COVID-19
 - [Information for Employees](#)
 - [Store Preparedness](#)
- Announce social distancing expectations through your PA system periodically throughout the day;
- Set up floor markers in your stores to show people how far apart they need to be from each other when waiting to check out;
- Have designated employee(s) regularly walk the floor to ensure that customers are following social distancing rules and provide guidance as needed
 - Consider staggering the number of shoppers in the store at one time to allow for increased distance between shoppers.
 - Consider controlling the flow of shoppers through the store by use of one-way aisles so shoppers to reduce the frequency of shoppers crossing paths.

- Place shield guards in front of the cashier and/or bagger that may not have the ability to stand 6ft away from the customer
- Consider prohibiting the use of reusable bags
- If you have an online delivery or curbside pickup capabilities, encourage your customers to use those methods before coming to the store.
- If you have self-checkout lanes, encourage their use to reduce the interaction between employees and consumers and also reduce the handling of money between consumers and employees.
- Encourage the use of cashless purchases to reduce the danger of transmission through money¹.
- Prohibit self-serve foods including hot bars, cold bars, and buffets.
- Prohibit product sampling
- Employees who have symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) should notify their supervisor and stay home.
- Sick employees should follow the [CDC-recommended steps](#). Employees should not return to work until the criteria to [discontinue home isolation](#) are met, in consultation with healthcare providers and state and local health departments.
 - Employers that are subject to the new paid sick leave-FMLA act (companies with less than 500 employees) are also required to display a new poster. You can access the poster [here](#).

IV. **Helpful suggestions for implementing preventative actions for grocery stores:**

- Shoppers should use separate entrances and exits to limit close contact between shoppers arriving and leaving.
- Consider using an entrance and exit monitor to keep count of the number of shoppers in the store.
- Limit shoppers in the store at one time (Example: only 100 shoppers in the store at one time). Consider size of store when implementing this recommendation. Stores should limit shoppers appropriately to ensure social distancing between staff and shoppers.
- Grocery carts can be used to maintain social distance between shoppers if a line forms outside of the store.
- At check out, use footprints in the lane diagraming the 6-foot distance needed between shoppers in line waiting to checkout.
- Regularly clean the conveyor belt, as well as the surrounding area, with a disinfectant and sanitizing wipes between shoppers checking out.

V. **Preventative Actions for preventing the spread of COVID-19:**

¹ [Illinois Retail Merchants Association Social Distancing Guidance](#)

COVID-19 is a new disease and we are still learning how it spreads. The following basic precautions should be followed by everyone in the general public:

- Maintain a 6-foot distance from shoppers and grocery store staff.
- Stay home if you are sick; Make use of community members willing to do your grocery shopping.
- Use curbside pickup or grocery delivery services.
- If available, use sanitizing wipes to wipe down carts and shopping baskets
- Follow proper hand hygiene protocols:
 - wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
 - use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water is not available;
 - soap and water or a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be used if the hands are visibly soiled;
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Following social distancing recommendations and proper handwashing will help prevent the spread of the disease. The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to mainly spread from close contact (i.e., within about 6 feet) with a person who is currently sick with COVID-19 as well as contact with surfaces contaminated with the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The virus likely spreads primarily through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how influenza and other respiratory infections spread. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Older people and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions are at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.

VI. Resources

[Illinois Food Retailers Association COVID-19 Updates](#)

[Illinois Retail Merchants Association Social Distancing Guidance](#)

[Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division Employee Rights March 2020](#)

[Illinois Department of Public Health Information](#)

[CDC When and How to Wash Your Hands](#)