



How to keep your employees safe

Follow these guidelines from OSHA: <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework>

Review safety programs and emergency action plans to ensure that they include infectious disease protocols and are compliant with [OSHA](#) and health and safety regulations. Circulate information to employees reminding them of [best hygiene practices](#) and [prevention measures](#).

Latest CDC Guidance on Masking

The CDC has issued an updated recommendation that those in COVID hot spots ([red areas on this map](#) - now including Vermont) wear masks while indoors regardless of vaccination status in order to maximize protection from the Delta variant as it spreads. While Governor Scott has not mandated masking in any form, businesses are allowed to require masks of employees and customers if they choose to. Consider your location on the CDC hot spot map when making this decision for your business.

Suggestions from the CDC that you may consider:

- Implementing flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts), to increase the physical distance among employees and between employees and others if state and local health authorities recommend the use of social distancing strategies.
- Require employees to
 - stay home if they have a fever, a cough, or symptoms of a cold
 - limit non-essential travel
- Discourage workers from using other workers' phones, desks, offices, or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
- Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces, equipment, and other elements of the work environment. When choosing cleaning chemicals, employers should consult information on [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-approved disinfectant labels](#) with claims against emerging viral pathogens. Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims are expected to be effective against SARS-CoV-2 based on data for harder to kill viruses.
- Increasing the amount of trash receptacles around the store to ensure customers can throw waste away themselves

Additional suggestions on how to further reduce contamination within your store:

- If possible, designate employees to take orders and become personal shoppers while customers wait outside
- Try to limit the number of customers physically in the store at any given time
- Provide a plastic shield between the customer and your employees to prevent transmission from sneezing or coughing
- Designate specific aisles or locations within a store that employees maintain to ensure their safety as well as reduce the number of products that customers come in contact with

- If customers are using cash, designate a lane or register for cash only and require that employees use gloves
- Provide clean pens with each transaction
 - Have the customer pick up and use the sanitized pen, do not hand it to them
 - Have the customer place the now used pen in a “dirty” cup for later cleaning

Urge customers to:

- Practice the CDC’s recommended practice of staying at least 6 feet away from each other
 - Some stores have placed markers six feet from each other, on the ground, at registers so customers know how far apart to stand
- Bag their own groceries
- Take advantage of low-contact options like curbside and delivery service
- Send one person to shop for families

What to do if an employee encounters someone that may have COVID-19 or becomes ill

If an employee calls in to self-report an illness, the Vermont Department of Health is directing Vermonters to contact their health care provider by phone. *Do not call the Vermont Department of Health and do not go to the hospital, except in a life-threatening situation.*

- Employees should use the CDC “[Self Checker](#)” tool to determine the probability of infection if they believe they have been in close contact with someone infected
 - Close contact is: being within six feet, for a long time, of someone who is diagnosed with COVID-19 during their infectious period, which starts one day before any symptoms began and continues until they are recovered.
 - Close contact is not: being more than six feet away in the same indoor environment for a long period of time, walking by, or briefly being in the same room. Generally speaking, **being the cashier for someone who is positive does not qualify as close contact according to the CDC.**
- Employers should not identify or disclose to other employees the reason that an employee is not at work.
- Documents pertaining to, or communications with, employees about their medical conditions should be kept in a secure and confidential location separate from the employee’s personnel file.
- Employers should engage employees in the interactive process and accommodate employees exhibiting signs and symptoms of the virus by allowing them to take time off from work to see a doctor
- **Employers should consult the following CDC resources to begin the cleaning process for their store**
 - [Cleaning and disinfection for community facilities](#)
 - [Cleaning and disinfecting your facility](#)
- We have assembled a list of industrial cleaners [available here](#). We do not endorse any of these cleaners. Those who have specifically mentioned COVID-19 cleaning are noted.

Deciding when to close in relation to a COVID-19 infection or other health matter

- We cannot give blanket advice on when and how to close when an employee, staff member or customer tests positive, or an employee calls in sick with symptoms related or unrelated to COVID-19
- Communicate openly with the community you serve; people will create their own narrative if you don't give them information. Don't create a panic, but don't let a panic create itself through lack of information.
- Keep in mind the confidentiality of employees when describing why or how a closing is occurring.
 - Employers should not identify or disclose to other employees or the public the reason that an employee is not at work.
- Ultimately, whether to close is dependent on numerous factors including when symptoms began, what symptoms have developed, where an employee was in contact with items and people in the store, and how often cleaning currently occurs. If you are questioning whether to remain open after potential infection, read through [OSHA guidance for businesses](#) and contact the Vermont Department of Health for guidance.

When can employees return to work when a doctor's note might not be possible because the healthcare system is taxed?

- Follow [CDC guidance](#) regarding self-isolation and return to work time
- Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:
 - At least 10 days have passed since symptom onset and
 - At least 24 hours have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and other symptoms have improved.
- Persons infected with SARS-CoV-2 who never develop COVID-19 symptoms may discontinue isolation and other precautions 10 days after the date of their first positive RT-PCR test for SARS-CoV-2 RNA.
- Employees who have come in close proximity to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 should self-isolate for 14 days. Those individuals can return to work if they do not exhibit symptoms upon completion of the 14 days.