



How to keep your employees safe

Follow these guidelines: <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>

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](#).

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
- When handling cash and coin
 - Do not touch your face afterward.
 - Ask customers to place cash on the counter rather than directly into your hand.
 - Place money directly on the counter when providing change back to customers.
 - Wipe counter between each customer at checkout.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as workstations, cash registers, payment terminals, door handles, tables, and countertops on a routine basis. Follow the directions on the cleaning product's label and clean hands afterwards.
 - Practice proper [hand hygiene](#). This is an important infection control measure. With appropriate hand hygiene, gloves are not necessary for workers who are not involved in food preparation. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol can be used, but not as a substitute for cleaning hands with soap and water.

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
- 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
- Have customers place cash on counters and transfer that cash directly into a Ziploc or other storage container. Let it remain there for 72 hours before having employees handle it. This should ensure you are not handling the cash during the active lifespan of the virus.

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
- Leave reusable bags at home for now
- 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
- The CDC has [issued guidance](#) for businesses that may be helpful in making this decision
 - Keep in mind the timeframe around virus transmission in relation to when employees were last in your store and when symptoms began
 - Keep track of where the sick employee has been and what they have handled, it may be prudent to close a portion of the store to deep clean but not the entire store.
- 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.
- The Vermont Department of Health and CDC have given guidance that the virus can survive for up to three days on certain surfaces. If you feel that closing is necessary, you could conceivably close for 72 hours and deep clean. This may help to eliminate any remnants of the virus.
- 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 the [CDC 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?

- Employees can return to work at least 72 hours after fever and symptoms have stopped; and at least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared. CDC guidance on symptoms is [here](#).
- 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.