

COVID-19: General Guidance for Businesses and Other Non-Health Care Settings

This document provides recommendations for businesses and other non-health care settings, including retail and food establishments, on how to help slow person-to-person transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

COVID-19

For general information on COVID-19, including how to guard against stigma, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus or cdc.gov/covid19. For real-time updates, text “COVID” to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.

Businesses and non-health care settings can take steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by promoting social distancing among everyone (staff, customers, and clients), as well as promoting routine cleaning and disinfection, and other personal hygiene and preventive measures.

Support social (physical) distancing

- *All Facilities:*
 - All non-essential employees should be working from home by [Order of the Governor](#). (Essential businesses and services are listed on the [New York State webpage](#)).
 - Emphasize that staff should **stay home if sick**.
 - Sick employees should be sent home immediately.
 - Staff that have been out sick should not return until: (1) at least seven days after their symptoms began or (2) at least three days after symptoms have improved and fever has ended without the use of fever-reducing drugs such as Tylenol and ibuprofen, whichever is longer.
 - Consider relaxing leave policies to accommodate staff following guidance to stay home until well. Inform employees of leave policies.
 - Allow employees to telecommute if the job allows.
 - Create staggered work hours and make work schedules flexible. For example, instead of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., consider changing some work hours to 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. or 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 - Reduce unnecessary assembly of staff, such as large meetings. Keep in-person meetings to limited staff, and use alternative methods to communicate information, such as bulletin boards or digital tools. Stagger break times, if possible.
 - Encourage staff to help reduce overcrowding in elevators. In buildings with elevators, limit the number of occupants per car. Only get into a car where you can maintain a physical distance from others. Otherwise, wait for the next elevator. If possible, take the stairs.
 - Encourage staff to help reduce overcrowding on public transportation. Walk or bike to work, if they can. When taking the subway, if the train is too packed, be patient and wait for the next one.
 - Avoid all nonessential travel.
 - Do not gather in large crowds and avoid all nonessential social interactions. Keep at least 6 feet between yourself and others, whenever possible.

- *Food industry and other retail establishments:*
 - Discourage groups of people from congregating inside and at entrances.
 - Manage lines inside and outside by keeping customers 6 feet apart. If space is limited, allow only one customer inside at a time.
 - Limit access to retail spaces when occupancy reaches 25% maximum capacity to minimize crowding and lines.

Conduct routine cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces

Routine cleaning of surfaces using appropriate cleaning and disinfection methods can help to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Non-health care settings should be vigilant about routinely cleaning and disinfecting surfaces, paying special attention to frequently touched surfaces and objects. There is no need to go beyond the routine cleaning, even if there was someone in your facility with COVID-19. For recommendations, visit nyc.gov/coronavirus and look for "General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting for Non-Health Care Settings."

- *Food industry and other retail establishments.*
 - Follow NYC Health Code requirements for food preparation to prevent foodborne illness. No additional food protection protocols are required for COVID-19.
 - Follow general cleaning and disinfection guidance for non-health care settings. High-touch surfaces, such as food, deli and checkout counters, should be wiped down frequently with disinfectants.
 - Place alcohol-based hand sanitizers near the cash registers to encourage hand hygiene.

Promote hand-hygiene and other preventive measures

Staff can take important preventive measures to protect themselves and reduce the spread of COVID-19. Staff should follow normal preventive actions while at work and home, such as practicing healthy personal hygiene and avoiding close contacts (social distancing).

- Require employees to practice healthy personal hygiene and to stay home if sick. Share the fact sheet "Stay Home, New Yorkers: What You Need to Know Now About COVID-19," available in multiple languages at nyc.gov/coronavirus.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if soap and water are not available.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead, wave.
- Print and post the flyer "New Yorkers: Stay Home to Stop the Spread of Coronavirus" in common areas. This flyer is available in multiple languages at nyc.gov/coronavirus.

Guidance for delivery workers

- Do not make deliveries if you are sick. You should stay home if you are sick.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer before and after each delivery.
- Practice social distancing, keeping 6 feet between you and others.

- Ask customer before delivering food whether the food can be left at the apartment door or with a doorman, if there is one.
- In buildings with elevators, only get into a car where you can maintain a safe distance from others. Otherwise, wait for the next elevator. If possible, take the stairs.
- If you do interact with a customer, remember to wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer after every transaction.

Face masks

The New York City Health Department does not recommend the routine use of face masks for people that are not sick. **If you are sick, stay home.** Unnecessary use of face masks can deplete supplies for health care providers and facilities that are providing critical medically necessary care to sick individuals in inpatient settings or in specific settings where staff cannot maintain 6 feet of separation from a patient.

Businesses should create a COVID-19 response plan that incorporates strategies to address needs

- Review human resources policies and practices. Make sure they are consistent with current public health recommendations and state and federal workplace laws.
- Identify critical job roles and functions. Plan out business operations with less staff or interruptions in functions. Consider cross-training personnel to perform essential functions.
- Plan communication strategies with staff and business partners to share information and updates, and to reduce fear and misinformation.
- If you have more than one business location, allow your local managers to take appropriate actions based on the conditions in each location. Outline appropriate actions in your outbreak response plan.
- Share and discuss the outbreak response plan with your employees. Allow them to provide feedback and address any gaps in the plan.
- Reach out to other businesses in your community, chambers of commerce, associations and networks to create a unified plan.

Take care of yourself and your family

If the symptoms of stress become overwhelming, you can connect with counselors at NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service. NYC Well staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care. For support, call [888-NYC-WELL \(888-692-9355\)](tel:888-NYC-WELL), text "WELL" to 65173 or [chat online](https://www.nyc.gov/nycwell) at [nyc.gov/nycwell](https://www.nyc.gov/nycwell).

For additional information about non-health care settings, see "Residential and Commercial Buildings FAQ" under "Facilities" at [nyc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/coronavirus).