



# Interim Guidance for Public Facing Businesses (May 14, 2021)

## Guidelines for Businesses:

Any scenario in which people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All organizations and programs that gather groups of people should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission. The guidance below will help businesses to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, we strongly encourage all employers to direct employees and customers to vaccination information at [Find Your Spot, Take Your Shot](#) and encourage them to get vaccinated. For guidance on vaccinations, please refer to our [Interim Guidance for Individuals Who Have Been Vaccinated Against COVID-19](#).

## This guidance covers the following topics:

- Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure
- Cloth Face Coverings
- Cleaning and Hygiene
- Monitoring for Symptoms
- Protecting Vulnerable Populations
- Combatting Misinformation
- Water and Ventilation Systems
- Additional Resources

## Social Distancing and Minimizing Exposure

[Social distancing](#) is one of the important tools we currently have to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. If you are not fully vaccinated, stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms’ length) from other people; do not gather in groups; stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings.

## Businesses are recommended to:

- Post signage at the main entrance that reminds people to stay 6 feet apart, wear a face cloth covering if they are not fully vaccinated and wash their hands frequently.
  - [NC DHHS Know Your Ws](#) provides [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Combined English and Spanish](#) versions of the “Wait” flyer.
- Clearly provide 6 feet floor markings in waiting areas, check-out lines, and other areas where people may congregate or wait.
- Develop and use systems that allow for online, email, or telephone transactions.
- Develop reservation times to the extent possible to help limit wait times and lines.

- Limit capacity in restrooms, elevators, and other enclosed areas to accommodate social distancing.

## Cloth Face Coverings

There is evidence that wearing a face covering can help reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially because people may be infected with the virus and not know it.

### **Businesses are strongly recommended to:**

- Have all employees and guests who are not fully vaccinated wear a face covering when they are indoors, unless the individual states that an exception applies.

### **It is recommended that businesses:**

- Have all employees and patrons who are not fully vaccinated wear face coverings when they are outdoors and less than 6ft away from others.
- Provide disposable face coverings to customers to wear while in the establishment.
- Visit NC DHHS [COVID-19 response site](#) for more information about the face covering guidance and access sign templates that are available in English and Spanish.

## Cleaning and Hygiene

Washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of transmission.

### **Businesses are recommended to:**

- Clean surfaces once a day, prioritizing high-touch surfaces. If there has been a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean and disinfect the space using an EPA-approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance, and any other areas throughout premises as needed.
- Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers throughout the day or event and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at all sinks.

## Monitoring for Symptoms

Staff should be encouraged to self-monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath.

If they develop symptoms, they should notify their supervisor and return home. More information on [how to monitor for symptoms](#) is available from the CDC.

### **Businesses are recommended to:**

- Have a plan in place for immediately removing employees from work if symptoms develop while at work. Employees who have symptoms when they arrive at work or become sick during the day should immediately be separated from other employees, customers, and visitors and sent home or to their healthcare provider.

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- ❑ Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who are symptomatic with fever and/or cough not enter, such as [Know Your Ws/Stop if You Have Symptoms](#) flyers (English - [Color, Black & White](#); Spanish - [Color, Black & White](#)).
- ❑ Establish and enforce sick leave policies to prevent the spread of disease, including:
  - Enforcing employees staying home if sick.
  - Encouraging liberal use of sick leave policy.
  - Expanding paid leave policies to allow employees to stay home when sick.
- ❑ [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is presumed positive by a medical professional due to symptoms, the employee should be excluded from work until:
  - No fever for at least 24 hours since recovery (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) AND
  - Other symptoms have improved (e.g., coughing, shortness of breath) AND
  - At least 10 days have passed since first symptoms**\*A test-based strategy is no longer recommended to discontinue isolation or precautions and employers should not require documentation of a negative test before allowing a worker to return.**
- ❑ [Per CDC guidelines](#), if an employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19 but does not have symptoms, they should remain out of work until 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, assuming they have not subsequently developed symptoms since their positive test.
- ❑ Require symptomatic employees to wear masks until leaving the facility. Cleaning and disinfecting procedure should be implemented by designated personnel following [CDC guidelines](#) once sick employee leaves.
- ❑ Provide employees with information on help lines to access information or other support in reference to COVID-19, e.g. 211 and Hope4NC Helpline (1-855-587-3463).

### Businesses can consider:

- ❑ Conducting a daily [symptom](#) screening (standard interview questionnaire ([English](#) | [Spanish](#))) of employees at entrance to workplace with immediately sending symptomatic workers home to [isolate](#).

## Combatting Misinformation

Help make sure that the information your employees is getting is coming directly from reliable resources. Use resources from a trusted source like the [CDC](#) or [NCDHHS](#) to promote behaviors that prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### It is recommended that businesses:

- ❑ Provide workers with education about COVID-19 strategies, using methods like videos, webinars, or FAQs. Some reliable sources include [NC DHHS COVID-19](#), [Know Your W's: Wear, Wait, Wash](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Latest Updates](#), [NC DHHS COVID-19 Materials & Resources](#)
- ❑ Promote informational helplines like 211 and Hope4NC and other [Wellness Resources](#).
- ❑ Put up signs and posters, such as those found [Know Your W's: Wear, Wait, Wash](#) and those found [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#).

## Water and Ventilation Systems

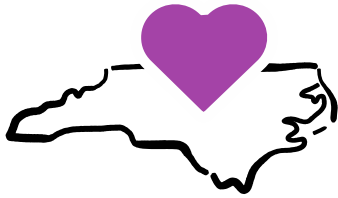
Reduced use of water and ventilation systems can pose their own health hazards. There is increased risk for Legionella and other waterborne pathogens from stagnant or standing water.

**Before reopening for the first time, it is recommended that businesses:**

- Follow the CDC’s [Guidance](#) for Reopening Buildings After Prolonged Shutdown or Reduced Operation to minimize the risk of diseases associated with water.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk to people using the facility.

**Additional Resources**

- NC DHHS: [North Carolina COVID-19](#)
- CDC: [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers](#)
- CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- CDC: [Reopening Guidance](#)
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- HHS/OSHA: [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)



**#StayStrongNC**

**Staying apart brings us together.  
Protect your family and neighbors.**

**Learn more at [nc.gov/covid19](https://nc.gov/covid19).**



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