



## Interim Guidance for Retail Businesses (March 26, 2021)

Businesses and organizations should follow the guidelines below to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**Guidelines for Conducting Business:** Any scenario in which many people gather together poses a risk for COVID-19 transmission. All businesses where groups of people gather in an enclosed space should create and implement a plan to minimize the opportunity for COVID-19 transmission at their facility. The guidance below will help retail businesses reduce the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

In addition to the requirements below, certain businesses **must follow** Closure Periods or Stay at Home Orders, when they are in effect. For more information on any requirements that are currently in effect and how this applies to your business, please visit [Business Closure Periods and Stay at Home Restrictions](#).

### **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 only tools to decrease the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing (“physical distancing”) means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. 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.

Retail Businesses are **required** to:

- Limit occupancy of all operating establishments to 100% percent of the stated fire capacity or 24 per 1,000 square feet if there is not a fire code number readily available AND ensure sufficient social distancing with guests at least 6 feet apart.
- Post the reduced “Emergency Maximum Occupancy” in a noticeable place. [Sign templates](#) are available in English and Spanish on NC DHHS COVID-19 response site.
- Post signage reminding attendees and staff about social distancing (staying at least 6 feet away from others). [Know Your Ws](#) sign templates are available in English and Spanish on the NC DHHS COVID-19 response site.

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- Mark six (6) feet of spacing in lines at point of sale and in other high-traffic areas for customers, such as at deli counters and near high-demand products.

It is recommended that Retail Businesses:

- Clearly mark designated entry and exit points; if a building has only one entry/exit point, try to stagger entry and exit times if possible.
- Clearly mark 6 feet of spacing in a designated area outside the establishment where people congregate due to limits on indoor capacity.
- Allow staff to work remotely as much as possible.
- Stagger shifts when remote working is not possible.
- Develop and use systems that allow for online, email, or telephone transactions.

### Cloth Face Coverings

There is growing 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.

Retail businesses are **required** to:

- Have all employees wear a face covering unless the worker states that an exception applies.
- Have all customers wear a face covering when they are inside the establishment, unless the customer states that an exception applies.
  - If a customer states that an exception applies, the business has the choice of whether to make an accommodation by providing curbside service, providing home delivery, allowing the customer to enter without a face covering, or by using some other reasonable measure.
- 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.

It is recommended that retail businesses:

- Provide cloth face coverings for employees and ask them to properly launder using hot water and a high heat dryer between uses.
- Provide disposable face coverings to customers to wear while in the establishment.

### Cleaning and Hygiene

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

Retail Businesses are **required** to:

- Perform ongoing and routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas (e.g., doors, doorknobs, rails, tables, chairs) with an [EPA approved disinfectant for SARS-CoV-2](#) (the virus that causes COVID-19), and increase disinfection during peak times or high customer density times.

It is recommended that Retail Businesses:

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- Promote frequent use of hand washing and hand sanitizer for staff and individuals. Require handwashing of staff immediately upon reporting to work, after contact with individuals, after performing cleaning and disinfecting activities, and frequently throughout the day.
- Provide, whenever available, hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at the entrance and other areas. Systematically and frequently check and refill hand sanitizers and assure soap and hand drying materials are available at all sinks.
- Provide tissues for proper cough and sneeze hygiene.
- 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 risk.

### 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.

Retail Businesses are **required** to:

- 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.
- Post signage at the main entrance requesting that people who have been 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](#)).

It is recommended that Retail Businesses:

- Have a plan in place for immediately removing employee from work if symptoms develop.
- 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)

Retail Businesses can consider:

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

## Protecting Vulnerable Populations

Information on who is at higher risk for severe disease is available from the [CDC](#) and [NCDHHS](#).

It is recommended that Retail Businesses:

- Designate a specific time for persons at higher risk to shop without the general population (such as early morning, or late afternoon).
- Enable employees to self-identify as high risk for severe disease and reassign work to minimize face-to-face contact and to allow them to maintain a distance of six feet from others, or to telework if possible.

## Combating Misinformation

Help make sure that the information your employees are 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 Retail 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 [Know Your W's: Wear, Wait, Wash](#) and those found in the [Social Media Toolkit for COVID-19](#).

## Water and Ventilation Systems

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

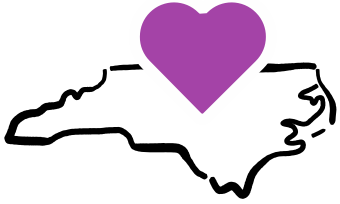
Before reopening, it is recommended that:

- 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](#)

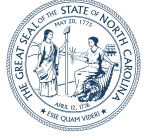
- EPA: [Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#)
- FDA: [Food Safety and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- HHS/OSHA: [Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)



**#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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