

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 transmission of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Update: Effective April 15, 2020 at 8 p.m., all employees must wear face coverings when customers are present. Employers must provide face coverings for employees at no cost to employees. For more information, please review the [State order](#) and see below for additional guidance. Read the State order by visiting coronavirus.health.ny.gov and searching for **executive order 202.16**.

For more information on COVID-19, including how to guard against stigma, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus. For real-time updates, text "COVID" to 692-692. Message and data rates may apply.

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

Promote physical distancing

- **Emphasize that staff must stay home if sick.** Staff who arrive to work sick or become sick at work should be sent home immediately.
- Staff that have been out sick should not return until all the following are true:
 - It has been at least seven days since their symptoms started.
 - They never had a fever or have not had a fever for the prior three days without the use of fever-reducing drugs such as Tylenol or ibuprofen.
 - Their overall illness has improved.
- Relax leave policies to accommodate staff following guidance to stay home until well. Inform employees of leave policies. Do not require a doctor's note to return to work.
- Allow employees to telecommute if the job allows.
- Create staggered work hours and make work schedules flexible. For example, instead of all staff reporting 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. Stagger break times, if possible.
- Do not have in-person meetings unless absolutely necessary. Keep in-person meetings to a small number of staff and maintain physical distancing of at least 6 feet when meeting in person. Use alternative methods to communicate, such as bulletin boards, email and telephone and video conferences.
- Limit the number of occupants per elevator car. Inform staff to wait for the next elevator if physical distance from others cannot be maintained and take the stairs if possible.
- Encourage staff to walk or bike to work. If a subway or bus is too crowded, people should wait for the next one.
- Avoid all nonessential travel.
- Do not gather in groups and avoid all nonessential interactions. Everyone (staff, customers, clients) should keep at least 6 feet between themselves and others.

Additional guidance for food industry and other retail establishments:

- Discourage groups of people from gathering inside and at entrances.
- Manage lines inside and outside by keeping customers 6 feet apart. If space is limited, allow only a limited number of customers inside at a time.
- Limit access to retail spaces when occupancy reaches 50% maximum capacity (including staff) to reduce crowding and lines.

Wear face coverings

Staff should wear a face covering and maintain at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and others. A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth (like a bandana or scarf) that covers your nose and mouth. It is essential that staff continue to practice physical distancing and healthy hand hygiene even when wearing a face covering — including keeping 6 feet of distance between themselves and others whenever possible. For more information, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for “FAQ About Face Coverings.”

Conduct routine cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces

Routine cleaning of surfaces using appropriate cleaning and disinfection methods can help 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. For recommendations, visit nyc.gov/health/coronavirus and look for "General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting for Non-Health Care Settings."

Food industry and other retail establishments:

- Follow New York City (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 preventive actions while at work and home, such as practicing healthy personal hygiene and avoiding close contact (physical distancing).

- Require employees to practice healthy personal hygiene and 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/health/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/health/coronavirus.

Additional guidance for delivery workers

- Do not make deliveries if you are sick. Stay home until you are better (see above).
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer before and after each delivery. Do not touch your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Keep at least 6 feet between yourself 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. Take the stairs if possible.

Businesses should implement 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

- It is natural to feel overwhelmed, sad, anxious and afraid, or to experience other symptoms of distress, such as trouble sleeping. Visit the “App Library” at nyc.gov/nycwell for online tools to help you manage your health and emotional wellbeing.
- NYS COVID-19 Emotional Support Helpline at 844-863-9314 is staffed 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week. The phone line is staffed with specially trained volunteer professionals who are there to listen, support and refer if needed.
- 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 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care. For support, call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355), text “WELL” to 65173 or chat online at nyc.gov/nycwell.
- If you need a health care provider, NYC Health and Hospitals provides care to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, insurance status or ability to pay. Call 844-NYC-4NYC (844-692-4692) or **311**.

For additional information about non-health care settings, see "Residential and Commercial Buildings FAQ" under the "Businesses and Other Facilities" section at nyc.gov/health/coronavirus.