

A hand with red nail polish holds a black smartphone over a payment terminal. In the background, a white bowl contains several chocolate chip cookies. The entire scene is partially covered by a teal overlay on the left side.

COVID-19 Response Planning

Playbook on Customer Health & Safety for RCC members

MAY 2020

RCC RETAIL
COUNCIL
OF CANADA

Context for this document

The following document has been prepared to provide members of the Retail Council of Canada a perspective on global best practices from retailers around the world on operating their business during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have compiled these materials through a scan of practices observed from companies in countries that have started to emerge from the government imposed restrictions on the essential, non-essential and restaurant sectors.

These materials are intended to provide you with a framework for key considerations and relevant global best practices as you operate your business in today's challenging environment.

They are not intended to be legal advice or to replace local health and government guidelines. The COVID-19 crisis is rapidly evolving and there are different considerations for retailers in different regions and sub-sectors of the retail industry. Readers should consult the applicable laws & regulations, and guidelines issued by federal & provincial health and labor authorities, to make the best decisions for their respective businesses.

Where feasible, sources & links have been provided & identified but, given the rapidly changing environment, sources are not possible for all statements. Members should perform their own research before executing any measures herein.

This is a non-exhaustive document and the Retail Council of Canada is keen to solicit your feedback on additional topics that may be relevant for your business for future iterations of this playbook.

What the playbook is

Framework of key issues to consider as retailers prepare to operate within the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic environment

Examples of practices observed from retailers across various sub-sectors around the world

Key issues to consider in implementing tactics from other regions and sectors

What the playbook is not

Exhaustive list of all issues that retailers may face in the current environment

Legal advice on practices businesses should follow. Please consult appropriate legal channels, Health Canada or other RCC resources on appropriate guidelines

Tactical advice on how to implement each potential action. Local and company-specific context will dictate what is possible for each retailer

Playbook for retail re-entry: Customer health & safety

Note: This is 1 of 6 chapters produced by the RCC to support members in COVID-19 response planning

Focus of this document



Customer health & safety

Ensure customers are & feel safe while shopping

- Customer screening
- Social distancing
- Checkout & payment
- Store cleanliness



Employee wellbeing

Keep employees safe & healthy

- Protective equipment
- Confirmed case response
- Employee testing



Retail operations

Continue to deliver product & operate stores

- Supply chain mgmt.
- Inventory mgmt.
- Labour planning & store hours



Merchandising & marketing

Provide relevant offering, given new context

- Product offering & asst.
- Pricing/promo/markdown
- Advertising & comms



Omnichannel

Adjust to new demand & operating needs

- Online fulfillment
- Delivery policies & options
- Trials & returns management



Finances

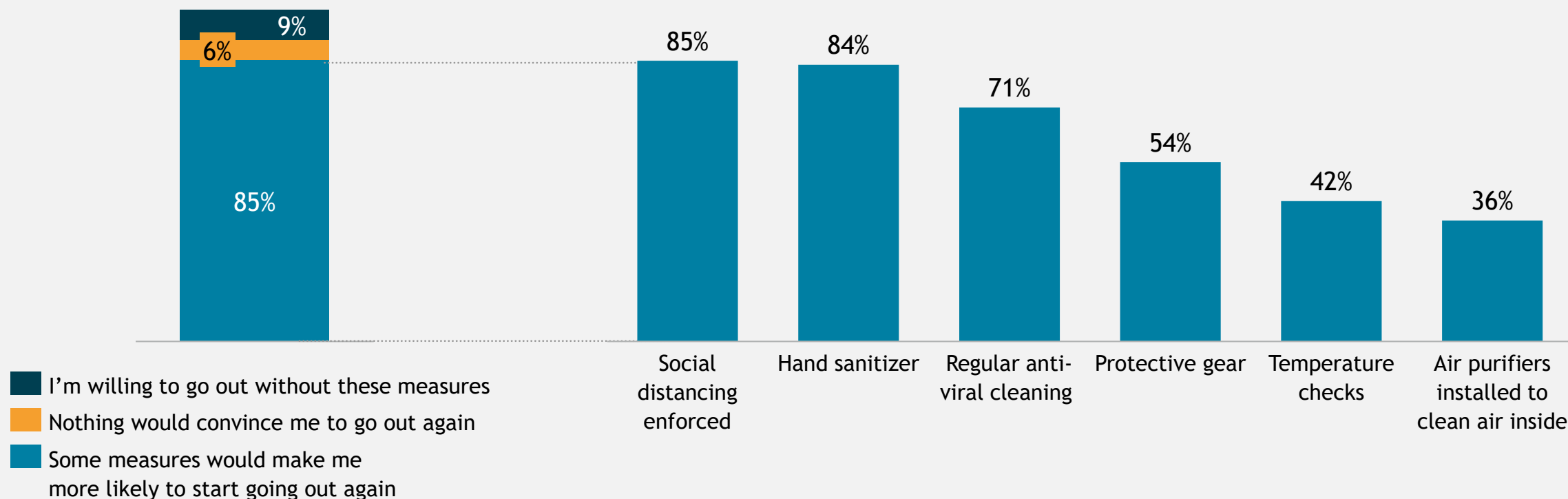
Maintain balance sheet to fund operations

- Cash & liquidity mgmt.
- Rent renegotiations

Context: Shoppers hesitant to resume retail visits—but investing in health & safety measures can change that

85% of Canadian consumers require measures prior to resuming going out again ...

... with social distancing and increased hygiene seen as the primary drivers



Note: Question text: "Would any of the following measures make you more likely to start going out again once things reopen (e.g. to restaurants, stores, public spaces)?"

Source: COVID-19 Canadian Consumer Sentiment Survey, April 24-26 2020, (N = 2,933 unweighted, representative within $\pm 3\%$ of CAN census)



Customer Health & Safety:

Four key priorities for retailers



1. Customer screening & requirements

- Manage access to the store to people who may be exposed to COVID-19, while protecting the vulnerable

Prior to entry



2. Social distancing

- Provide adequate space to allow customers to navigate while avoiding close proximity with others

During shopping / dining



3. Checkout & payment

- Limit interaction during checkout and payment processes to minimize transmission risk

At checkout



4. Store cleanliness

- Over-invest in cleaning to ensure any potential virus exposure is quickly eradicated

Ongoing/ recurring



Customer Health & Safety:

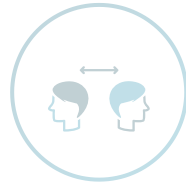
Four key priorities for retailers



1. Customer screening & requirements

- Manage access to the store to people who may be exposed to COVID-19, while protecting the vulnerable

Prior to entry



2. Social distancing

- Provide adequate space to allow customers to navigate while avoiding close proximity with others

During shopping / dining



3. Checkout & payment

- Limit interaction during checkout and payment processes to minimize transmission risk

At checkout



4. Store cleanliness

- Over-invest in cleaning to ensure any potential virus exposure is quickly eradicated

Ongoing/ recurring



Customer screening: Six practices leading global retailers are considering in response to COVID-19

		Applicable to:		
		Essential	Non - essential	Restaurant
Assess COVID-19 symptoms	1 Conduct temperature checks on customers			
	2 Verbally triage customers on entry for risk factors before store entry			
	3 Set up signage and store communication asking customers to stay home if feeling unwell/displaying any symptoms			
Reduce risk of transmission	4 Provide hand sanitizer at key entrances/exits			
	5 Require customers to wear PPE (masks/gloves), as needed			
	6 Ensure vulnerable/elderly are supported via access to priority online delivery slots, dedicated store hours, or other measures			

Temperature checks on customers

Context & rationale

- Fever is a common symptom of COVID-19 (present in 83% of symptomatic cases of COVID-19 according to the CDC)
- Scanning for fever of customers on entry can give retailers the ability to reduce risk of COVID-19 spread to both customers & employees - and may provide assurance to consumers

Examples

- **Starbucks (Hong Kong):** Customer temperature screened before entering stores
- **Eurospin (Italy):** Launched a pilot of taking temperature checks for customers. ([Link](#) - in Italian)
- **Regional players (US & Canada):** Carried out temperature testing on customers before entering store ([Link](#)), ([Link](#)), ([Link](#))
- **Italy:** The two hardest-hit regions, Lombardy and Piedmont, recommended that markets take shoppers' temperatures. Only some have done so, with others saying they cannot get hold of the scanners they need ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- All stores require a thermometer, signage & staff trained to administer, triage and appropriately communicate temp check results
- Tests thus far in Canada are voluntary for customers - required their consent before they can be administered, and customers are allowed to shop even if they decline
- Sourcing thermometers is currently challenging and will likely be increasingly difficult in the short term
 - As of February, seeing a surge in demand ([Link](#))
- Note: The low global supply has led to increased production of lower quality units. In response, some countries - like China - have released new regulations to try to limit poor quality goods from being exported; this can further delay the at-scale availability of thermometers

Starbucks (Hong Kong): Temperature screenings





Verbally triaging customers at entrance

Context & rationale

- Similar to temperature checking, verbal triage by an employee can give retailers the ability to reduce risk of COVID-19 spread to both customers & employees
- Key symptoms of COVID-19 from Health Canada can be found here ([Link](#))

Examples

- **Grocers (North America):** Some players are carrying out verbal screening at entrances:
 - Have you travelled in past 14 days?
 - Have you been in contact with someone who has travelled in past 14 days?
 - Are you showing symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Have you been in contact with someone who is showing symptoms of COVID-19?
 - Are you waiting for test results?
- Customers that are seen to be high risk are asked to return home and use a delivery service or a friend/relative to procure groceries

Execution considerations

- Train employees on standardized triage questions and appropriate response to customers, including suggesting isolation and/or medical consultation
- Be conscious of privacy—and where possible avoid triage in groups
- Similar to other screening measures, verbal triage is best executed prior to entry into the store/restaurant to reduce transmission risk

HELP REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

TAKE STEPS TO REDUCE THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19):

- follow the advice of your local public health authority
- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- avoid close contact with people who are sick
- cough and sneeze into your sleeve and not your hands
- stay home as much as possible and if you need to leave the house practice physical distancing (approximately 2 m)

Health Canada: Symptom guidance

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of COVID-19 may be very mild or more serious and may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

- FEVER** (greater or equal to 38°C)
- COUGH**
- DIFFICULTY BREATHING**

IF YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS

- Isolate at home to avoid spreading illness to others.
- Avoid visits with older adults, or those with medical conditions. They are at higher risk of developing serious illness.
- Call ahead before you visit a health care professional or call your local public health authority.
- If your symptoms get worse, contact your health care provider or public health authority right away and follow their instructions.

FOR INFORMATION ON COVID-19:

1-833-784-4397 | canada.ca/coronavirus

Public Health Agency of Canada | Agence de la santé publique du Canada

Canada

Signage & communication on COVID-19 symptoms

Context & rationale

- Signage on COVID-19 symptoms is a recommended guideline in several countries and required by law in others (e.g., Austria)
- Signage and communication on COVID-19 symptoms provides another avenue for customers to reflect on travel history or their symptoms and avoid entering stores if they are exhibiting symptoms - ultimately making them feel more safe

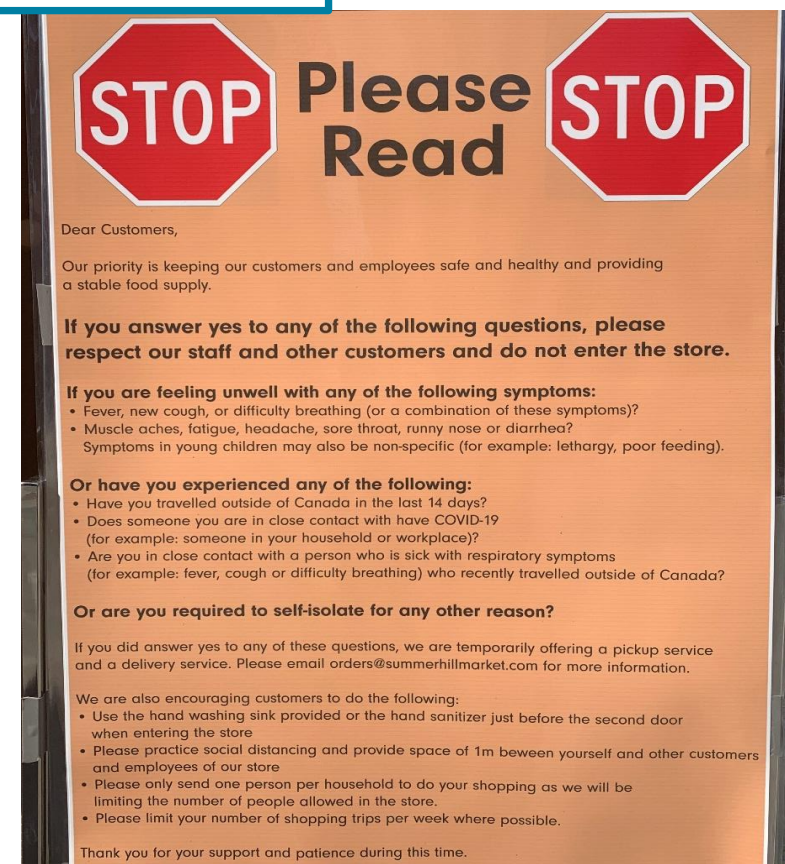
Examples

- **Co-op (Italy):** Issued detailed communications to customers covering best practices around three key stages (before shopping, in-store and once back at home) ([Link](#))
- **Kroger (US):** Posted signs at entrances notifying customers to stop if they are sick and ask them not to enter their stores ([Link](#))
- **Other retailer tactics:**
 - Increased communications to reassure customer base and promote new safety measures, e.g., via video

Execution considerations

- Ensure signage and PA announcements meet the requirements as laid out by local regulations and provide the latest guidance from Health Canada
- Ensure signage is placed at the entrance, is visible, draws attention and is readable
- If using in-store PAs, make announcements frequently so customers are informed as soon as they enter the store

Grocer (Canada): Customer triage via signage





Hand sanitizer at entrance and exits

Context & rationale

- Providing avenues for customers to quickly disinfect their hands reduces the risk of transmission to both other customers and employees
- Beyond health benefits, highly appreciated by customers, with 84% of Canadian consumers indicating this makes them more likely to visit a particular store
- Highest impact for customers if they are able to apply sanitizers immediately after touching store surfaces and products

Examples

- **Various retailers (Vietnam):** Many stores have hand sanitizer outside the door with a polite note asking all shoppers to apply sanitizer before entering and after exiting
- **Woolworths (Australia):** Provides hand sanitizers to all customers at store entrances ([Link](#))
- **Grocer (Canada):** Offers hand sanitizers to all customer at store entrance and exits
- **Various bakery chains (Taipei):** Customers' hands sprayed with disinfectant upon entry

Execution considerations

- Set up new supply relationships to reliably procure sanitizers for in-store use
- Ensure sanitizers meet Health Canada requirements (must have Drug Identification number)
- Place sanitizers at entry and exit to allow customers to clean hands before and after touching store surfaces, and anywhere in store where contact with frequently touched surfaces may occur
- Where possible, use automated 'touchless' dispensers vs. bottles to increase hygiene and avoid theft

Grocer (UK):
Disinfectant at store entry



Personal protective equipment requirement for customers

Context & rationale

- Wearing PPE reduces the risk of transmission by limiting direct contact with surfaces
- Masks help prevent the spread of fluids/droplets from the wearer to others, limiting healthy individuals from contracting any fluids from the wearer ([Link](#))
- Masks for general public generally not certified to protect the wearer from COVID-19 transmission (beyond medical-grade masks such as the N95 respirator)
- Government has encouraged the public to save medical-grade masks for healthcare workers

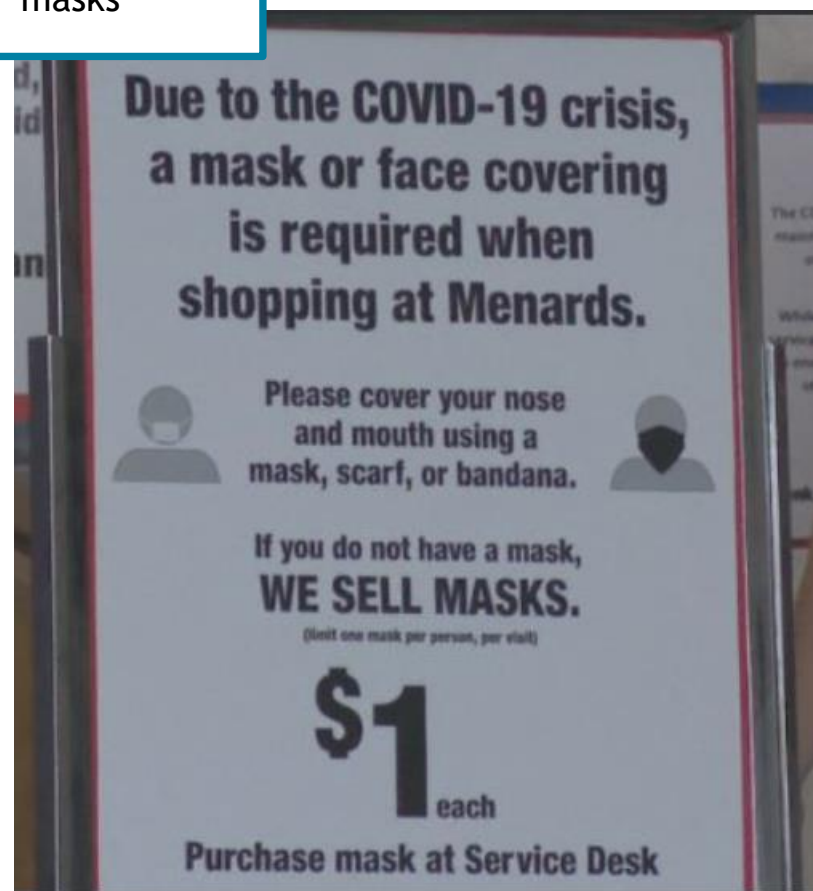
Examples

- **FairPrice (Singapore):** Limited number of people in its stores and urges shoppers to wear masks ([Link](#))
- In many countries, masks are either recommended (e.g., [USA](#), [Germany](#)) or required for customers in all enclosed public spaces (e.g., [Vietnam](#), [Austria](#))
- **Stop & Shop & other small retailers (US):** Asked customers to wear masks ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Consider making mask usage voluntary and promote the use of masks, especially in types of retail locations where social distancing is difficult (e.g., small store locations)
- Be clear, as in example signage, that masks for the general public may be home-made - e.g. scarves, bandanas, fabric masks
- Ensure sufficient signage at entrance to inform customers of change in policies
- Follow Health Canada and local guidelines to determine if masks are mandatory or voluntary. In most jurisdictions in Canada, masks are not required at this time

Mass Retailer (US):
Requiring use of masks





Vulnerable/Elderly

Context & rationale

- Elderly and vulnerable populations are at most risk of serious complications from COVID-19
- Creating specific policies for their access to stores and online delivery will ensure that they are supported at a time of need and are able to purchase essential or non-essential items

Examples

- **Woolworth's, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Kroger (Australia, UK):** Retailers setting aside first hour for seniors and the more vulnerable ([Link](#))
- **Sainsbury's (UK):** Providing online customers age 70+, or who have a disability, priority access to online delivery slots ([Link](#))
- **Ikea (London):** Reopening store in order to allow its Swedish food market to be accessed by vulnerable people and key workers ([Link](#))
- **Ahold Delhaize Stop & Shop (US):** Under a partnership with Uber, retailer will provide half-price rides for customers aged 60+ to and from all stores during shopping hours reserved for seniors. The program kicked off Apr 8 ([Link](#))
- **Woolworths (Australia):** Dedicated two shopping windows for vulnerable customers and for those on the frontline ([Link](#))
- **Big Lots (US):** Set aside first hour of business for elderly and vulnerable ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Ensure special hours are listed on entry-ways and available on your websites
- Broaden language around special store hours to include 'most vulnerable', to be inclusive of immunocompromised individuals—and educate employees
- Consider placing special store hours during periods of generally low traffic, to reduce impact on remaining customer base

Retailers (US):
Promoting special hours for those at-risk

Reserved shopping hours for seniors and those most at risk.

8am – 9am

Monday through Friday



We're offering exclusive hours to vulnerable customers

- Senior citizens
- Expectant mothers
- Those with health concerns



8:30 A.M. - 9:30 A.M.



Customer Health & Safety:

Four key priorities for retailers



1. Customer screening & requirements

- Manage access to the store to people who may be exposed to COVID-19, while protecting the vulnerable

Prior to entry



2. Social distancing

- Provide adequate space to allow customers to navigate while avoiding close proximity with others

During shopping / dining



3. Checkout & payment

- Limit interaction during checkout and payment processes to minimize transmission risk

At checkout



4. Store cleanliness

- Over-invest in cleaning to ensure any potential virus exposure is quickly eradicated

Ongoing/ recurring



Social distancing: Six practices leading global retailers are considering in response to COVID-19

		Applicable to:		
		Essential	Non - essential	Restaurant
Limit number of customers	1 Limit the number of customers / diners			
	2 Use drive-through or click & collect mechanisms to serve customers outside the store			
Change shopping behaviour in store	3 Implement de-centralized ordering systems (vs. central hub / touch screen)			
	4 Change layout to limit customer & employee interactions (incl. one-way flow)			
	5 Place signage in key areas to ensure customers are socially distancing			
	6 Use technology to enforce social distancing policies			



Limit the number of customers

Context & rationale

- Emerging global best practice to limit the total number of individuals within the store at any one time
- Close contact with a symptomatic or asymptomatic patient is a known cause for the spread of COVID-19, limiting people in stores allows customers to more easily exercise social distancing
- Some countries and provinces have already put guidelines on number of people that are allowed within the store (e.g. Saskatchewan has guidelines of max 1 person per 4 m² of retail space)

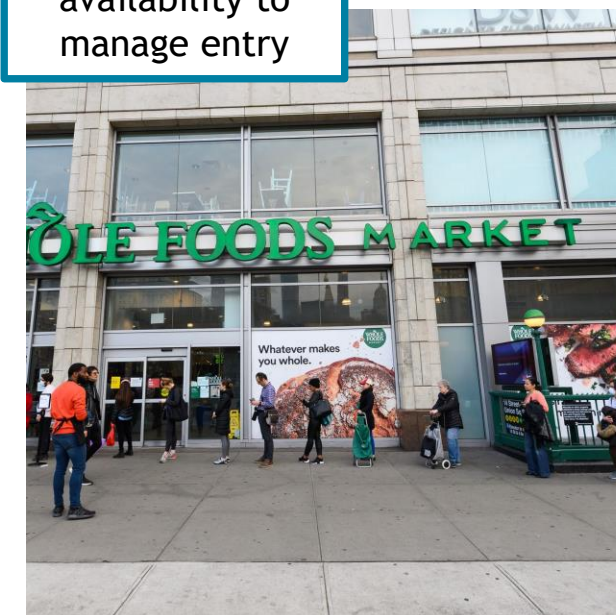
Examples

- **Grocers (Denmark & the Netherlands):** Shopping cart mandatory with limits on number of available carts/baskets per store, if a shopping cart or basket is not available then customers may not enter store ([Link](#))
- **Whole Foods (US):** Limiting number of customers to number of available carts/baskets
- **E. Leclerc (France):** Access to stores limited to those who are alone ([Link](#))
- **Malls (United Arab Emirates):** Regulations limit parking (25%-50% of usual capacity available) and max. 30% occupancy in mall's common & gross leasable areas to limit customers ([Link](#))
- **Aldi (Europe):** Piloting a Stop/Go traffic light system to manage flow of customer traffic ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Follow local guidelines on the max. number of people in store; where local guidelines are not available, consider international best practices (Germany & Switzerland suggest 1 customer per 10 m²/108 sqft)
- Consider carts, baskets and/or dedicated employees to manage count and flow of customers, where appropriate sanitize cart/basket at hand-off to waiting customers
- Maintain social distance in store access queues, consider ground markers for line & providing visibility to estimated wait time
- Smaller retailers: Consider locking entries, train employees to grant access only after they have served and ushered a customer out of the store

Grocer (US):
Using cart
availability to
manage entry





Limit the number of diners in restaurants

Context & rationale

- Emerging global best practice to limit the total number of individuals within the store at any one time
- Close contact with a symptomatic or asymptomatic patient is a known cause for the spread of COVID-19, limiting people in stores allows customers to more easily exercise social distancing
- Some countries and provinces have already put guidelines on number of people that are allowed within the restaurant (e.g. Saskatchewan limiting restaurant capacity to 50% of historic)

Examples

- **Yardbird Restaurant (Hong Kong):** Operating at 50% capacity as per rules limiting number of customers in restaurants ([Link](#))
- **Restaurants (Texas):** Regulations take a different approach: As of the end of April, dine-in restaurants can serve up to 50% of regular capacity in rural counties with 5 or fewer confirmed cases, while restaurants in other areas can only serve at 25% capacity ([Link](#))
- **Restaurants (Singapore):** Before “circuit breaker” implementation (harsher restrictions) - maximum of 4 diners per table, 50% of capacity used at maximum

Execution considerations

- Closure of bar seating area best practice - allowing more social distancing for staff and widening pathways through the restaurant
- Requires reduction in number of available tables and chairs - may require additional storage space and/or creating clear signage to cordon off closed tables
- Must determine if worthwhile to re-open given margin considerations



Restaurant (Hong Kong): All bar seating closed, barriers between tables



Restaurant (Beijing): Removed tables and chairs to increase space



Drive-through and click & collect mechanisms

Context & rationale

- Given customer risk of transmission of COVID-19 in confined spaces, critical to provide alternative arrangements for customers to shop at retail stores - incl. drive though / collection methods
- Public health authorities have issued clear guidance that remaining outdoors can lower risk of transmission given air circulation

Examples

- **Walgreens (US):** Introduced drive-thru shopping in select stores, which allows shoppers to get limited products without leaving their cars; the service is different than click-and-collect as shoppers do not need to pre-order ([Link](#))
- **Canadian Tire and Home Depot (Ontario):** Closed stores and offered curbside pick-up ([Link](#)) ([Link](#))
- **Esselunga (Italy):** Used text messages for click and collect in some areas
- **Small retailers (Austria):** Tobacco shops serving customers on the street, while opticians making part of store accessible, asking customers to ring a bell to enter ([Link](#))
- **Tesco (UK):** Increased click-and-collect capacity to support higher demand ([Link](#))
- **Small retailers (US):** Some plan to implement curbside pick-ups ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Consider optimizing store front, curbside & parking areas for increased click & collect capacity & speed: dedicated lanes, parking spots & support staff
- Factor in additional costs from hiring staff to support click & collect policies; additional technology costs may also be necessary for website/app development
- Careful consideration is required for maximum number of orders per hour to avoid back-log of employees fulfilling orders

Electronics retailer (France):
Click and Collect counter
outside ([Link](#))





De-centralized ordering systems

Context & rationale

- Social distancing can be challenged at hub points such as ordering touch screens and cashier desks
- Where possible, customers should use their own devices for ordering to both reduce in-store congestion and prevent contaminated surfaces (e.g. central touch-screens)

Examples

- **McDonald's (China):** Installed QR codes on the floor, distanced between each other, for customers to place mobile orders in-store rather than going to a central cashier desk
- **Restaurant chain (Texas):** No indoor seating, customers order before sitting and pre-pay via card, patio seating only ([Link](#))
- **Fast food chain (Taipei):** Diners encouraged to sit first, then order via mobile instead of lining up

Execution considerations

- Post signage outside to inform customers of pre-ordering / new ordering practices
- For full-service restaurants, post menus outside to encourage timely decisions and determine whether a pre-order system could be feasible (e.g. calling / texting in order) to limit close interaction

McDonald's (China): QR code ordering system



Restaurant (Texas): Patio seating only, outdoor pre-payments, no customers allowed inside





Layout changes

Context & rationale

- Changing the layout of the store will help limit the number of interactions between customers and employees and may provide increased sense of safety to customers
- Close contact with individuals with COVID-19 is one of the primary causes of spread of the virus so efforts to promote social distancing will be key in reducing transmission risk

Examples

- **H-E-B (US):** One dedicated entrance to help monitor customer flow; floor decals at checkout lines inform customers on appropriate distance requirements ([Link](#))
- **Walmart (North America):** Added single-direction aisles to stores in the U.S. and Canada ([Link](#))
- **Grocer (Canada):** Installed floor markers to space out customers and re-thinking store design amid social distancing
- **Grocers (Canada & US):** Cleared aisles to widen access and ensure customers can maintain distance

Execution considerations

- Critical for stores to think about flow of traffic through the store and change store layouts to avoid congestion - incl. considering spacing out products in high-demand categories
- One-way aisles are best practice in ensuring customers keep distance from each other
- Consider removing any chairs from store-fronts to avoid customers from congregating
- Use pallets/moveable displays strategically to separate directional flow of customers
- Where feasible & not pre-existing, create dedicated entrance & exits to facilitate flow

Grocer (US): One-way aisle system





Layout changes – For restaurants

Context & rationale

- Close contact with individuals with COVID-19 is one of the primary causes of spread of the virus so efforts to promote social distancing will be key in reducing transmission risk
- This requires rethinking the set-up of restaurants and fast food services - from ordering to group size to seat placement

Examples

- **Restaurants (Taipei):** Maximum of 4 diners per table, seating >1.5m apart and/or separated by partition
- **Yardbird (Hong Kong):** Inserted panels to separate backs of booths from adjacent diners

Execution considerations

- Best practice includes floor markings for social distance, clear signage outside restaurant about new practices, plexiglass separations in more open-concept spaces

Restaurants (Shenzhen, China): Published regulations

<p>(1) All diners must have a body temperature measurement before entering the dining area. If the temperature exceeds 37.3°C, the establishment shall not allow the diner to enter the dining place. Once found, they should register immediately and report to the community prevention and control organization and be reminded to seek medical treatment in a timely manner. Catering business units (stores) should have a surveillance camera aimed at the entrance and record the entry and exit of relevant personnel.</p> <p>(2) Customer are required to wear a mask, take off the mask at the last moment of sitting and eating, and wear a mask immediately after eating and drinking. They must wear a mask to leave their seat.</p>	<p>(3) The interval between customer seatings shall be no less than 10 minutes, and the next seating should be arranged after disinfection.</p> <p>(4) Customers should be seated no less than 1 meter apart from each other. In fast food restaurants with small tables, there should be no more than one person per table.</p> <p>(5) Small private rooms can only have one table. Private rooms with more than two tables cannot have more than 5 people dining per table. When customers sit next to each other, the separation distance shall not be less than 1 meter. After dining at each table is concluded, customers should immediately disinfect and there should be a 10 minute wait before the next party is seated at the table. Private rooms should be well ventilated and windows should be opened beforehand.</p> <p>(6) The catering business must establish a traceability system for diners, and at least one dining guest shall be required to present a valid form of identification for each table, or by registering his "Shenzhen" APP registration information and contact information for inspection and tracking. Dining accounts must be kept; including the registration of each guest's related information, dining time, disinfection records, etc. for inspection and tracking.</p>
---	--

Restaurant (China): Diners seated in groups of max. 4



Restaurant (China): Plexiglass separation between diners





Signage around stores

Context & rationale

- Critical to inform customers about the need to socially distance at stores so they are aware of store policies without ambiguity
- Clear floor markings on required minimum distance helps to ensure rules are easy to follow

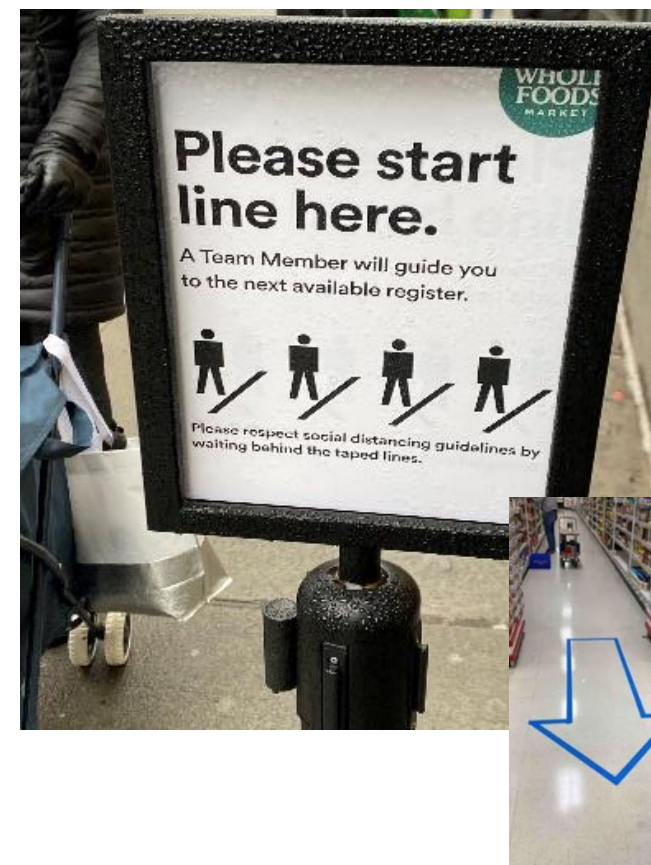
Examples

- **Tesco (UK):** Introduced system of floor markings to help customers follow social distancing ([Link](#))
- **Mercadona (Spain):** System of pavement markings for customers waiting to enter store, no entry unless minimum distance observed ([Link](#))
- **Walmart (North America):** Added single-direction aisles with floor markings to stores in the U.S. and Canada ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Ensure that signage follows local guidelines and restrictions on required distance between individuals
- International guidelines for distance between individual varies from 1 meter (Italy, China, Austria) to 2 meters (Canada, Switzerland and Czech)
- Ensure signs are legible (i.e. appropriate font size) and visible (placed in open areas)
- Ensure floor markings follow a logical path through the store to prevent customers from assembling in any one area

Grocer (US): Floor markings & social distancing guidelines





Use of technology to help enforce policies

Context & rationale

- While it is necessary to have social distancing policies, it is increasingly difficult to enforce policies without putting employees at risk
- Enforcement of policies provides a greater sense of security to customers and helps to maintain safety and security of employees and customers
- Use of best practices can reduce risks and ensure adherence

Examples

- **Edeka (Germany):** Introduced Pepper, a robot to teach customers how to appropriately social distance during the coronavirus outbreak ([Link](#))
- **Kroger (US):** Monitors the number of customers per square foot in its stores using its QueVision technology ([Link](#))
- **Lowe's (US):** Developed an app, available on employees' handheld devices, to implement a new customer limit protocol. Each store manager can now monitor foot traffic and limit entrance based on CDC and local guidelines ([Link](#))
- **Other online tools:** Informing customers about line-ups to limit crowding ([Link](#))
- **Mobile app (Singapore):** Released an app that informs the public of crowds at all major malls and grocery stores to guide trip decisions ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Technology helps with social distancing but does not eliminate the need for employees - critical that employees that are responsible for enforcement are provided required PPE to protect themselves and are provided training on social distancing
- Technology solutions are helpful but may be expensive options for small to mid-sized retailers, where physical barriers/outdoor distancing markers may be more apt
- Stores must consider additional costs from technology, hiring staff or security in their cash flow projects and store opening decisions

Kroger (US): Using QueVision technology



QueVision automatically provides a count of customer entering and existing stores, allowing Kroger to limit number of customers that can enter the store



Customer Health & Safety:

Four key priorities for retailers



1. Customer screening & requirements

- Manage access to the store to people who may be exposed to COVID-19, while protecting the vulnerable

Prior to entry



2. Social distancing

- Provide adequate space to allow customers to navigate while avoiding close proximity with others

During shopping / dining



3. Checkout & payment

- Limit interaction during checkout and payment processes to minimize transmission risk

At checkout



4. Store cleanliness

- Over-invest in cleaning to ensure any potential virus exposure is quickly eradicated

Ongoing/ recurring



Checkout & payments: Three practices leading global retailers are considering in response to COVID-19

		Applicable to:		
		Essential	Non - essential	Restaurant
1	Encourage methods to reduce risk of transmission during payment (e.g., cashless)			
2	Temporarily discourage re-usable bags and ask customers to pack their own products (incl. for restaurant leftovers)			
3	Close every second check-out /cash counter			



Contact-less payments

Context & rationale

- Payment often requires contact with cash from customer to employee and vice-versa, increasing the risk of transmission
- While there is some disagreement between experts on whether cash payments pose a risk from COVID-19 ([Link](#)) or not ([Link](#)), in the absence of concrete evidence, best practice is to promote the use of cashless & touchless payment, where possible, while continuing to accept cash

Examples

- **Aldi, Tesco, Sainsbury's (UK):** Cash-handling being reduced, customers requested to pay by card or smartphone ([Link](#))
- **Restaurants (US & Canada):** Some went cash-less before shut-down ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- In Canada, businesses and consumers must agree on the form of payment, giving retailers the option to disallow cash payment ([Link](#))
- Bank of Canada recommends not completely disallowing acceptance of cash as it impacts the vulnerable population that do not have access to credit or debit cards
- Instead, retailers should promote the use of cards, where possible, and offer mobile payment/contact-less payment options, but continue to accept cash as fail-safe
- If cash-less transactions are not possible, some best practices to consider:
 - Consider employee PPE
 - Ask customers to place cash on the counter rather than handing to employees
 - Place money directly on the counter when providing change back to customers
 - Wipe counter between each customer at checkout
 - If possible, consider isolating cash received from cash dispensed for 24-48 hours

Grocer (North America):
Employees encouraged to
avoid touching cards or
cash at check-out





Discourage re-usable bags or ask customers to pack their own bags

Context & rationale

- Re-usable bags typically increase touchpoints of employees with customers or number of surfaces customers touch during the process of bagging
- Customer and employee concern stems from study that shows that virus can live on surfaces (cardboard and plastic studied) for 1-3 days ([Link](#))

Examples

- **Waitrose and Hy-Vee (US):** Asking that customers stop using reusable bags, 5c charge on bags waived ([Link](#), [Link](#))
- **Atlantic Superstore (Canada):** Temporarily not accepting reusable bags for groceries ([Link](#))
- Many Canadian grocers are removing fee for plastic bags at stores and limiting use of re-usage bags
- **Target (US):** Retailer will not sell reusable bags and will provide plastic bags for free
- **Woolworths (Australia):** Customers asked to pack their own groceries to minimize contact and if a customer's shopping bag is not clean, the supermarket will replace it for free ([Link](#))
- **Grocers (Canada):** Some asking that customers pack their own groceries if using re-usable bags

Execution considerations

- Ensure clear signage at entrance as well as at check-out so that customers are aware of new policies before they begin their shop
- Consider changing policies to provide plastic bags for free (if allowed by local regulations)
- Ensure employees are trained to avoid direct contact with customers - bags should be placed on a surface for customers to collect
- Discourage placing re-usable bags on communal surfaces (i.e. checkout counters)
- Note: Many Canadian municipalities ban disposable plastic bags ([Link](#)), however many have temporarily halted these bans (please check with your local municipality)

Grocer (US):
Example signage





Close every second check-out / cash counter

Context & rationale

- Check-outs (for retailers) and cash counters (for restaurants) have customers and employees congregating in close proximity
- As such, it is important to create policies to ensure customers are safe from risk of transmission of virus in these areas

Examples

- **Tesco (UK):** Introduced system of floor markings to help customers follow social distancing ([Link](#)), disabled every second check-out lane
- **Woolworths (Australia):** Every second checkout station is closed and staff wipes payment sections of every self-checkout counter after each transaction (+ 'daily deep cleaning')
- **Loblaws (Canada):** Introduced more frequent cleaning, particularly in 'high-frequency' areas e.g. cashier stations, self-checkouts, credit card terminals, extra hand sanitiser provided at check-out ([Link](#))
- **Various retailers (US, Europe):** Promoting self-checkout

Execution considerations

- Reducing check-out lanes or cash counters will mean longer lines especially during peak hours; in these situations, ensure that store layout is well designed to ensure customers are able to maintain social distance while waiting (e.g. floor markers)
- Incorporate other measures such as Plexiglass to ensure employee safety during check-out
- If shifting to self-checkout / self-ordering model: implement clear procedures for sanitizing interfaces after each use

Grocer (US): Every second checkout closed





Customer Health & Safety:

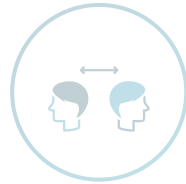
Four key priorities for retailers



1. Customer screening & requirements

- Manage access to the store to people who may be exposed to COVID-19, while protecting the vulnerable

Prior to entry



2. Social distancing

- Provide adequate space to allow customers to navigate while avoiding close proximity with others

During shopping / dining



3. Checkout & payment

- Limit interaction during checkout and payment processes to minimize transmission risk

At checkout



4. Store cleanliness

- Over-invest in cleaning to ensure any potential virus exposure is quickly eradicated

Ongoing/ recurring



Store cleanliness: Three practices leading global retailers are considering in response to COVID-19

	Applicable to:		
	Essential	Non - essential	Restaurant
1 Frequent, scheduled cleaning & sanitization of high-touch areas & communal items (pinpads, doors, carts, menus, etc.)			
2 Restrict opening hours to allow for additional cleaning as necessary			
3 Communicate changes to customers			



Frequent, scheduled cleaning & sanitization

Context & rationale

- Store-front spaces are frequently touched by customers and employees, increasing the risk that individuals with COVID-19 can spread the virus from the store
- To reduce this risk, critical to sanitize frequently and with appropriate disinfecting products (including government Drug Identification Number) - noting that while *cleaning* is a necessary first step, *sanitizing* ultimately eliminates the virus

Examples

- **H-E-B (US):** Adding an extra manager in charge of Covid-19 response who ensures store cleanliness and social distancing ([Link](#))
- **Walmart (US):** Has begun using two gallon sprayer kits to sanitize entire shopping carts quickly and effectively; planning to ship out these kits to stores that don't have them ([Link](#))
- **Grocer (Canada):** Introduced more frequent cleaning, particularly in 'high-frequency' areas e.g. cashier stations, self-checkouts, credit card terminals, extra hand sanitiser provided at check-out
- **Big Lots (US):** Hand sanitiser at every register and sanitising wipes near shopping carts & baskets; all registers, credit card pin pads, phones, and door handles wiped down frequently throughout the day ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Best practice is to first clean and then disinfect surfaces
- Create checklist of all items to be sanitized: e.g. for a restaurant - menus, condiments, counters, tables, chairs, door handles, payment interfaces, pens, receipt holders, etc.
- Assign clear responsibilities among staff - cleaning & disinfecting duties allocated by area of work vs. specific staff in charge of all cleaning
- Disinfection will require supply of gloves to be used by employees as well

Government of Canada: Guidelines on cleaning & disinfecting

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) CLEANING AND DISINFECTING PUBLIC SPACES

This document provides guidance on cleaning and disinfecting of public settings, including schools, universities, public libraries, museums, public transit, communal residences and workplaces.



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- Surfaces frequently touched with hands are most likely to be contaminated. These include doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, cabinet handles, faucet handles, tables, countertops and electronics.
- It is not yet known how long the virus causing COVID-19 lives on surfaces, however, early evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days.

- Disinfecting products kill germs on surfaces using chemicals.
- Use only **approved hard-surface disinfectants** that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms the disinfectant product is approved and safe for use in Canada.

CHOOSE A PRODUCT THAT CLEANS AND DISINFECTS

- When cleaning public spaces, choose products that clean and disinfect all at once (e.g. premixed store-bought disinfectant cleaning solutions and/or wipes when available).
 - Cleaning products remove germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces by using soap (or detergent) and water. Cleaning does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.

CREATE A CLEANING PROCEDURE

- Operators of community settings should develop or review protocols and procedures for cleaning public spaces. This will help determine where improvements or additional cleaning may be needed.
- Read and follow manufacturer's instructions for safe use of cleaning and disinfection products (e.g. wear gloves, use in well-ventilated area, allow enough contact time for disinfectant to kill germs based on the product being used).
- Wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer after removing gloves.



Restrict opening hours for additional cleaning

Context & rationale

- Given attention to social distancing and hygiene in public areas, key to have established processes for deep-cleaning stores
- Hours reduction balances need for staff relief - given strain of working in front-line retail environments

Grocer (US):
Limited hours

Examples

- **Walmart & Albertson's (US):** Restricting opening hours to allow for more thorough cleaning([Link](#))
- **Malls (United Arab Emirates):** Re-opening regulations allow malls to operate for up to 10 hours ([Link](#))
- **Essential retailers (Canada):** Reduced operating hours to allow for additional cleaning

Execution considerations

- Restricted store hours may lead to crowding and line-ups when stores are open; stores should consider enforcing social distancing outside their premises to keep customers safe
- Limited hours may also impact the ability of certain customers to shop at your stores; consider offering curbside pick-up/drive-through for such customers
- Monitor other local businesses to determine established norms for business opening times - grocery stores likely an initial indicator
- For mall locations, opening hours may be controlled by mall operator
- Franchised store operators may be restricted to guidelines set by the franchisor
- Communicate reduced business times with customers via signage, including mention of deep-clean practices





Communicate changes to customers

Context & rationale

- New measures will only re-assure customers if highly visible & actively communicated
- Public highly attuned to differences in safety measures - recent example of US-based app to rank grocery store safety ([Link](#))

Examples

- **Co-op (Italy):** Issued detailed communications to customers covering best practices around three key stages (before shopping, in-store and once back at home)
- **Tesco (UK):** New campaign showcasing the supermarket's efforts in promoting social distancing in its stores, which features real staff members as they explain the supermarket's public-health measures; website outlines safety measures in stores ([Link](#))

Execution considerations

- Leverage existing communication mediums, where possible (social media, email, store signage, flyers, etc.)
- Be wary of potential information overload for customers - bundle changes into fewer, more relevant announcements and differentiate from other retailer communications (e.g., with educational content)

Starbucks (North America):
Emphasizing safety and ongoing cleaning



COVID-19 Disclaimer

The situation surrounding COVID-19 is dynamic and rapidly evolving, on a daily basis. Although we have taken great care prior to producing this presentation, it represents a view at a particular point in time. This presentation is not intended to: (i) constitute medical or safety advice, nor be a substitute for the same; nor (ii) be seen as a formal endorsement or recommendation of a particular response. As such you are advised to make your own assessment as to the appropriate course of action to take, using this presentation as guidance. Please carefully consider local laws and guidance in your area, particularly the most recent advice issued by your local (and national) health authorities, before making any decision.

The background image shows a close-up of a person's hand holding a smartphone, positioned over a payment terminal. The hand has red nail polish. In the lower right corner, a white plate with several chocolate chip cookies is visible. The entire scene is partially covered by a semi-transparent teal rectangle on the left side, which contains the RCCC logo.

RCCC RETAIL
COUNCIL
OF CANADA