



Recommendations for grocery stores

Prevention of COVID-19 in Nunavik communities on Red and Orange Alert levels

(Document updated on October 28, 2021)

With the threat of variants of COVID-19, which are potentially more virulent and have a greater risk of transmission, it has become necessary to further reduce this risk.

These preventive measures are very important since they will help slow down the spread of the virus.

As a reminder, the COVID-19 virus cannot grow on food, and it is unlikely to be transmitted through food when the proper hygiene measures are respected by your employees. COVID-19 is most commonly spread through:

- Close contact with an infected person, when the person coughs or sneezes and is less than two metres away from you;
- Direct contact, such as touching or shaking hands with the infected person then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands;
- Touching any object that has been contaminated by a sick person, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

What you can do to help protect against this virus

Here are some recommendations and examples of what food businesses can do to continue to protect customers and staff against this virus:

Workers or customers with symptoms

- Employees or customers presenting symptoms (such as fever, unusual cough, difficulty breathing, loss of smell or taste, nasal congestion, sore throat, unusual fatigue or headache) must stay home, call the CLSC/Nursing Station or the Info Health Line at 1-888-662-7482 and follow the instructions.
- Revise the list of symptoms with employees so they know what to look for.
- Employees or customers who are in quarantine following a trip outside Nunavik, who were in contact with a positive case of COVID-19 or who have COVID-19 must also stay home.

Mask and physical distancing

- Employees should maintain a distance of two metres (six feet) or more from others. Direct contact (handshakes, hugs) must be avoided. Ensure that physical-distancing measures are applied during breaks and meal periods (e.g., avoid gatherings) or when using common areas.
- Employees should wear a medical mask at all times indoors, regardless of the distance between individuals. Note that the medical mask must be changed every four hours or earlier if it is wet, soiled or damaged.
- Encourage employees to take breaks separately to ensure social distancing.
- Workers who interact with another person within two metres must wear eye protection (goggles or visor covering the face to the chin) in addition to the mask, unless a physical barrier is installed (e.g., Plexiglas panel). For example, the cashier must wear a mask at all times. He/she will also have to wear eye protection, unless a Plexiglas panel separates him/her from the customer.
- Give clear indications at the entrance of the stores for customers on the rules to follow:
 - It is mandatory for customers aged 10 years and up to wear a face mask or face covering. For children between two and nine years old, it is recommended to wear a face mask or face covering, but it is not mandatory. Children under the age of two years and anyone who has trouble breathing or is unable to remove his/her mask or face covering without assistance should not wear it.
 - Wash hands when entering the store.

- Maintain a distance of two metres from others.
- Lines should be marked on the floor at the cash registers to encourage customers to respect physical distancing.
- The number of customers in the store at the same time should be limited to one customer per 20 square meters (m²), equivalent to one customer per 200 square feet (ft²). For example, a 15,000-square-foot store could accommodate 75 people. Grocery stores have to display the maximum number of customers at the entrance of the store.
 - To control the number of customers, the store can make sure the number of grocery carts available correspond to the maximum capacity of customers. Each customer should be asked to take a cart or a basket at the entrance, which should be disinfected before use.

Handwashing and respiratory hygiene

- Handwashing or sanitizing stations, with disposable paper towels and contactless garbage cans, should be installed for the customers at the entrance and for workers (cashiers, food handlers, etc.). If you run out of hand sanitizer for the entrance, ask customers to wash hands with soap and warm water in a functioning sink if feasible.
- Employees and food handlers should wash their hands frequently with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.
- Remind employees often especially when:
 - arriving and leaving, before and after handling food, objects and waste, before and after signing documents, after performing cleaning/disinfecting, after going to the toilet, after sneezing, coughing or blowing nose, after eating, drinking or smoking.
- It is generally not recommended to wear gloves. They become contaminated like hands and people wearing them often forget the basic hygiene rules. Handwashing is more appropriate.
- Avoid touching face (nose, mouth and eyes). Be even more careful if you are a smoker.
- Cough and sneeze into the elbow.

Cleaning and sanitizing

- Disinfect high-traffic areas and surfaces (e.g., door and refrigerator handles, counters, cash-registry areas, payment terminal machines, washrooms, carts and baskets) at least at each shift and when relevant, and when changing users (e.g., telephone).
- Disinfect grocery carts between clients (or make sure disinfectant and paper towels are available for the customers to do it when they enter the store).
- Disinfect checkout area often and at least at each shift change.
- Keep kitchen clean at all times.

*Disinfectants or disposable disinfectant wipes are generally effective against COVID-19. Read indications on the container for proper use. You can also use diluted bleach (4 teaspoons (20 mL) of domestic bleach in 4 cups (1 L) of water). Use a fresh mix of water and bleach every day.

Additional protection for staff and customers

- Appoint an employee at the entrance and ideally also in the store to ensure that customers respect the instructions.
- Encourage customers to tap cards for payment when possible.
- Ask customers to touch only the items they want to buy and have them bag their groceries themselves.
- Avoid self-service (e.g., straws and utensils, dessert or coffee stations).
- When delivering food, deliver the food to the client's porch (do not enter the house) and prioritize payment by telephone (credit or debit card).
- Make sure ventilation is sufficient, whether natural (opening windows) or mechanical.

Protection for people at risk

- Limit children's access.
- At-risk employees such as pregnant women and others (e.g., those with a chronic disease) should consult a health professional to determine if they can work with the proper precautions.

- Offer telephone, email or online services for grocery orders with home delivery for people in isolation/quarantine and for people at risk (e.g., elders, people with a weak immune system).

For general information related to COVID-19, call 1-888-662-7482, chat with the NRBHSS Facebook page through *Messenger* or consult the webpage <https://nrbhss.ca/en/coronavirus>.

Important note

This document is a summary of the sanitary measures applicable in grocery stores in a context of the appearance of variants under enhanced surveillance. It is the employer's responsibility to know and ensure compliance with the recommendations issued by the *INSPQ* which apply to its field of activity.

Useful link

Recommendations for grocery stores and essential services from the *INSPQ* (French only) – September 28, 2021:
<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/covid/2926-commerces-covid19.pdf>

Useful NRBHSS tools

Protect yourself, protect others FLYER
https://nrbhss.ca/sites/default/files/covid19/flyer_EN.pdf

Protect yourself, protect others POSTER
https://nrbhss.ca/sites/default/files/covid19/poster11x17_EN.pdf