

COVID-19

COVID-19 National and Local
Guidance for Supermarkets and
other Food Retailers

BACKGROUND

As a country, we all need to do what we can to reduce the spread of coronavirus, the government has given clear guidance on self-isolation, staying at home and social distancing. Food shopping has been highlighted as one of few activities essential to continue.

To ensure our population can stay safe when out shopping, below is key guidance to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

CONTEXT FOR SUPERMARKETS

The below guidance has been written for both supermarkets and all other food retailers of any size.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness; therefore it is spread from person to person via respiratory droplets. These droplets can be transferred 1) directly from person to person in close proximity to one another 2) from person to surfaces within the supermarket setting and therefore between staff and customers touching the same surfaces. There is little evidence to suggest it is spread by respiratory droplets on exposed foods and the variety of food packaging, but a route to avoid potential contamination.

PREVENTING CORONAVIRUS TRANSMISSION IN THE SUPERMARKET

There are many areas of the supermarket such as trolleys which have frequent usage from one customer to the next; This gives ample opportunities for COVID-19 to pass between people. Therefore, the local authority have created some guidance for supermarkets to follow regarding good disinfection practice.

KEY AREAS FOR ATTENTION

- Public awareness and actions they can take
- Cleaning of:
 - Trolleys and Baskets – especially handles
 - Hand held checkout devices
 - Touch displays at check out
 - Contact points such as fridge/freezer handles
 - Escalator and staircase handrails
 - On site ATMs
- Hand sanitising
- Opening hours and impact on length of time in the supermarket
- Maintaining social distancing.
- Good hand hygiene for staff and wellness of staff
- Encouraging the use of card instead of cash where possible

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ACTIONS THEY CAN TAKE

Supermarkets and food retailers have a key role to play in displaying advice and guidance during this time.

Please follow the link:

<https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/101/resources/5016>
for access to a suite of posters and leaflets which can be downloaded and printed.

The Council has created an information poster to display at the entrance and exit.
The key areas of this poster are:

- Sanitise hands on entry to and exit from the supermarket (if supermarkets can provide sanitiser and unless trolleys/baskets are cleaned between every use), to reduce the likelihood of transferring respiratory droplets from hands to surfaces.
- To cough into a tissue (or your sleeve) and wash hands after to prevent transfer to supermarket surfaces
- To refrain from touching your face whilst shopping
- To maintain a 2 metre distance from other shoppers
- To wash your hands once you return home, to ensure that you reduced your likelihood of transferring anything from your hands once you have returned home.

CLEANING TROLLEYS AND TOUCH POINTS:

At the start of each shopping day all touch points require cleaning these are:

- Trolleys and Baskets – specifically handles
- Hand held checkout devices
- Touch displays at check out
- Contact points such as fridge/freezer handles
- On site ATMs

These should also be frequently cleaned throughout the day – the recommendation is after each use, at the minimum hourly, using the following guidelines originating from:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings

It is important that this is completed following the guidance to ensure that the touch points are cleaned rather than contributing to the spread of contamination by transfer of contaminant from surface to surface.

In summary cleaning requires:

- Disposable cloths or paper roll and disposable mop heads, to clean trolley and handbasket handles/other relevant touchpoints, following one of the options below:
 - use either a combined detergent disinfectant solution at a dilution of 1,000 parts per million available chlorine
 - or
 - a household detergent followed by disinfection (1000 ppm av.cl.). Follow manufacturer's instructions for dilution, application and contact times for all detergents and disinfectants
 - or
 - if an alternative disinfectant is used within the organisation, this should be checked and ensure that it is effective against enveloped viruses
- Avoid creating splashes and spray when cleaning.
- Any cloths used must be disposed of and should be put into waste bags as outlined below.
- Any items that are heavily contaminated with body fluids and cannot be cleaned by washing should be disposed of.
- Individuals undertaking the above should wear disposable or washing-up gloves and aprons for cleaning. These should be double-bagged, then stored securely for 72 hours then thrown away in the regular rubbish after cleaning is finished.

Supermarkets should assign the above task to specific individual or individuals. The above guidance is relevant to any supermarket/food retailer of any size.

HAND SANITISING

Supermarkets should also provide hand sanitiser for customer use, the rationale is to reduce the likelihood of customer contaminating frequently used touch points in the supermarket.

The key guidance:

- Provision on a observed podium to prevent the sanitiser being removed
- with a push lid (concern around use of the sanitiser by multiple people is removed as once the sanitiser is applied the hands are classed as clean)
- This will be required to be provided where staff observing do not break the 2 meter distance rule
- This will be required to be provided where it doesn't cause customers to queue and encroach the 2 metre rule.

Super markets can provide additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities if possible, providing soap, water and hand sanitiser

SOCIAL DISTANCING IN SUPERMARKETS

Social distancing measures are steps you can take to reduce social interaction between people. This will help reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). They include things like keeping 2 metres away from people outside of your household and washing your hands as mentioned in previous sections of the guidance.

Full social distancing guidance can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults

Social distancing in supermarkets may be best evaluated by the store manager, however a few general indicators may be relevant to the majority of retail outlets:

- use additional signage to ask customers not to enter the shop if they have symptoms
- regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded
- use floor markings inside the commercial spaces to facilitate compliance with the social distancing advice of 2 metres, particularly in the most crowded areas, such as serving counters and tills
- use vertical signage to direct customers into lanes if feasible to facilitate movement within the premises while maintaining 2 metre distance
- make regular announcements to remind customers to follow social distancing advice and clean their hands regularly
- place plexiglass barriers at tills and counters if feasible, as an additional element of protection for workers and customers
- encourage the use of contactless payments where possible, without disadvantaging older or vulnerable customers (ensure these are frequently cleaned)

(Taken from PHE guidance at

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19)

OPENING HOURS AND IMPACT ON LENGTH OF TIME IN THE SUPERMARKET

Some supermarkets are opening their doors to vulnerable people and NHS workers before the tills are open, e.g. 9.30am browsing time and tills open at 10am. This means NHS staff and the vulnerable are able to get key items however, in many cases this leads to these groups remaining in the supermarket longer than needed or queueing as they wait for tills to open.

The guidance is therefore to open the tills at the same time as opening the doors to the public; therefore those who wish to purchase very few items can get in and out of the store as quickly as possible.

This reduces queues in the store as customers wait for tills to open and prevents queues down isles which cause customers to break the 2 meter rule as some customers are still shopping whilst others are waiting to pay.

It is important to still provide targeting opening hours for NHS and Vulnerable people however it maybe that general public are pushed back access to a later time as a result.

GOOD HAND HYGIENE FOR STAFF AND STAFF WELLNESS

Any food handler who is unwell should not be at work. If they have symptoms, they should follow government advice and stay at home.

Although it is very unlikely that coronavirus is transmitted through food, as a matter of good hygiene practice anyone handling food should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. This should be done as a matter of routine, before and after handling food, and especially after being in a public place, blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.

For staff working on the supermarket floor, these are also environments where, when busy, it can be difficult to maintain 2 metre distance rules between people but to apply it as much as possible.

Staff break-out areas and back of shop operations should also be treated in the same manner as the rest of the supermarket, all frequent touch points cleaned regularly.

Food business operators should continue to follow the Food Standard Agency's guidance on good hygiene practices in food preparation and their Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) processes

We hope that the above is helpful, and we will endeavour to keep you updated, as the situation evolves.

For further support in Sandwell, email Food_BusinessCentre@sandwell.gov.uk

KEY GUIDANCE

Key information about the national and local picture with links to key guidance and resources can be found here (this is updated regularly and sets out the national approach being taken).

Information for the public

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public

Guidance regarding staying at home and guidance for those at extremely high risk

www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19

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