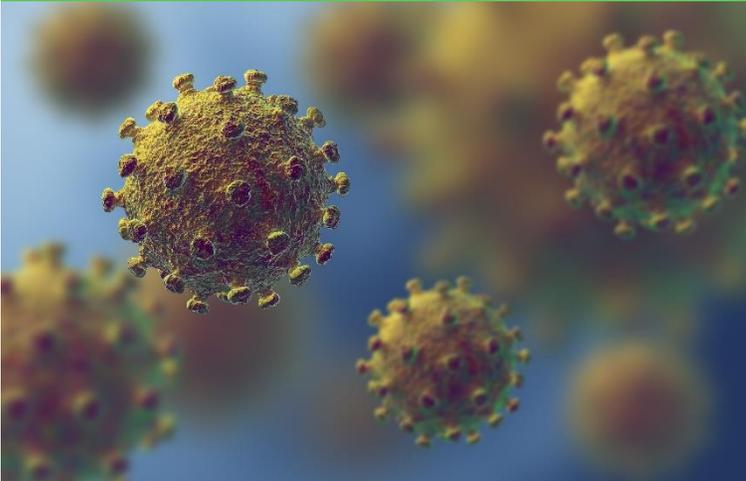


Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

FACT SHEET

COVID-19 Guidance for Grocery Store Shoppers



Guidance for Grocery Store Shoppers

Grocery shopping is one of the few essential outings left, so it is important to protect store employees, yourself and your family. Currently, we have no evidence of food or food packaging being linked to the spread of COVID-19.^{1,2} COVID-19 is spread by:

- An infected person coughing, sneezing or talking.
- Personal contact such as shaking hands.
- Touching a surface or object that has the virus on it, and then touching our face.

Stores are making important changes to protect the public from COVID-19. Following the **tips below** will help reduce your exposure in the grocery store and protect the workers providing this vital service.

Decide on Who Goes Shopping

- Choose a person in good health to be the main grocery shopper. Shop only if you feel well and can be reasonably sure that you have not been in contact with someone who has COVID-19 or is showing symptoms.
- **Do not go out and shop if you are:**
 - Sick or living with someone who is sick
 - Just home from travelling
 - Over 70
 - Living with a weakened immune system or chronic health condition
- Plan your shopping list carefully so that you can buy enough food and other supplies to last at least a week. Buy more and aim for one trip a week.



¹<https://www.inspection.gc.ca/covid-19/questions-and-answers/eng/1584648921808/1584648922156#q1b>

²<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/newsletter/food-safety-and-Coronavirus.html>

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- Shop at a less busy time. Be cautious about store hours set aside for “seniors-only” shopping. They can be busier than if you went at an off-peak hour on a different day.
- Be respectful of store employees. They are doing their best in a difficult situation.

Keep Clean

Keeping your hands, surfaces and objects clean is simple:

- Clean the handle of your cart.
- Bring your own wipes and hand sanitizer; although the stores have been trying hard to keep a public stock, the supplies are short.
- Wash or sanitize your hands as you enter and after to get into your car.
- Handle only the items you intend to buy.
- Use clean carry-out bags for purchased food and grocery products. Use your own bags or reusable containers ONLY if you can clean and sanitize them between uses. Pack your own reusable bags to protect the cashier.
- Use a credit or debit card to avoid handling money or receiving change.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Use a non-medical mask when grocery shopping, visiting a pharmacy, using public transit. Even if you have no symptoms, this can reduce the COVID-19 spread to others but has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. Maintaining physical distancing and handwashing are still necessary. Leave medical masks for use ONLY by health care workers. Use a bandana or sew your own mask, or craft one from an old T-shirt and elastic bands.³

- Know that gloves are not necessary and offer no added protection. **Frequent handwashing is key.**
- Once home, wash your hands well before and after handling food packaging, after removing food from the packaging, before you prepare food for eating, and before you eat.
- Clean counters and other surfaces you've touched after you've put away the groceries. Regularly clean surfaces and cooking equipment that may come in contact with food.



Keep Your Distance

- Avoid shopping in large groups – this should not be a family outing. Leave children at home. They are more likely to touch products and touch their faces.
- Keep your distance from others while in the store. Staying 2 arms-length (6 feet) apart is an easy way to measure your distance.
- Avoid common greetings, such as handshakes. A simple wave and a friendly smile work. This is not the time to stand around and chat with friends.
- If the grocery store seems busy, come back another time to prevent larger gatherings.
- Offer to shop for those who are self-isolating or those who may be at higher risk, such as older adults and those in poor health.

³ [Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, Media Update April 6, 2020.](#)

Keep Safe

- Follow all the everyday food safety practices. Handle and prepare food safely such as separating raw meat from ready-to-eat food in your cart and in your fridge. Refrigerate perishable foods. Cook meat to the right temperature.
- Wash fruits and vegetables well under running water when arriving home and before eating. Scrub those with a hard skin. **Don't use bleach or other strong chemicals on any produce.**
- As a precaution, it is okay to wipe down non-porous cans and boxes with soap and water or disinfectant wipe.



Delivery and Take-Out Tips

- Follow the drop-off or pick-up instructions given by the restaurant or grocery store.
- Minimize contact with employees. Stay 2 metres (6 feet) apart from the delivery person.
- If picking up groceries, consider opening the car door or trunk latch yourself so the person loading does not touch your car handles.
- Avoid a direct hand off by asking for food to be left on the doorstep.
- Use touch-free or cashless payments.
- Prepay via the internet or telephone for your delivery order.
- Remove your food from the external packaging and dispose of it in the garbage or recycling right away.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Wash your hands well for 20 seconds after touching packaging and before eating.

For more information:

- [COVID-19 Information on Produce for Consumers](#)
- rcdhu.com
- ontario.ca/coronavirus
- canada.ca/coronavirus

Adapted from materials produced by Leeds, Grenville, Lanark District Health Unit. Current as of April 1, 2020.

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