



**COVID**  
CORONAVIRUS  
DISEASE  
**19**

# REOPENING GUIDANCE RETAIL BUSINESSES

Reopening businesses safely and responsibly are vital for both the local economy and the well-being of our community. As businesses reopen, there are important steps you can take to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Harris County.

## Recommendations Before Reopening

- Conduct routine HVAC maintenance and change air filters
- Employers should ensure regular [cleaning and disinfection of](#) all areas including offices, bathrooms, and common areas, focusing especially on frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs and drawer handles
  - Clean surfaces with soap and water
  - Next, disinfect surfaces using [products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-Cov-2](#), the virus that causes COVID-19, and that are appropriate for the surface
  - Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products for concentration, application method, contact time, and required personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Operations can begin after completing the cleaning and disinfection procedures

## Help Protect Employees and Customers

- [Follow CDC guidance for cleaning and disinfection, handwashing, social distancing, and respiratory etiquette](#)
- Screen employees before entering the building for symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, or known close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19
- Have employees wash hands when entering the building and provide hand sanitizer at accessible locations

- Make sure soap and paper towels are available at all restroom hand sinks. Keep hand sanitizer available for staff and customers
- Visibly place signage to encourage frequent hand washing and other ways to help stop the spread
- Require all employees to wear face coverings such as a mask, cloth mask, bandana, scarf or shield to protect others
- If using gloves, make sure gloves are in good condition, no holes or visible dirt
- Change gloves often or after each task, washing hands each time gloves are changed
- Where lines may form, ensure 6 ft distance using floor tape or visual markers
- Increase routine cleaning frequencies and use approved disinfectants for restrooms, high traffic, and high touch customer use areas
- Use contactless payment options if available or take steps to minimize contact during transactions
- Consider providing physical barriers like plexiglass between employees and customers when 6 ft of distance is not possible
- Disinfect any items that customers use

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## Planning for Absenteeism

- Determine how you will operate with a reduced staff if employees cannot work due to illness, staying home to care for sick family members and those who must stay home to watch their children
- Prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies
- Cross-train employees to perform essential functions, so the workplace can operate even if key employees are absent

## Free COVID-19 Testing is Available for Everyone

We encourage business owners and employees to get free testing at a testing site. The updated online self-assessment tool is confidential and designed to serve the public in the Greater Houston area. To register for testing, visit <http://covidcheck.hctx.net/>. For those who do not have access to the online tool, call **832-927-7575** to get scheduled for testing. Free testing is available regardless of citizenship status and for those who are uninsured.

Employees should **not** return to work if they are sick. If an employee has a sick family member they live with or has been near an ill person, they should notify their employer immediately.

Please go to [www.hcphtx.org](http://www.hcphtx.org) for any additional information on how to keep yourself or employees safe during this pandemic.

\*People at higher risk for severe illness are those who are 65 or older, especially those with chronic lung disease; moderate to severe asthma; chronic heart disease; severe obesity; diabetes; chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; liver disease; or weakened immune system.

## Additional Information is Available

[The Governor's Report to Open Texas](#)

[CDC Business & Employer Resources](#)

## CHECKLIST FOR MINIMUM RECOMMENDATIONS

### Health Protocols for Serving Your Customers

- Having dedicated hours during the day for customers at a higher risk of severe illness. Reducing the need for customers to enter the store by delivering purchased goods to the vehicle
- If practical, monitor what items customers touch to clean or disinfect when the customer leaves the retail establishment.

- Encourage the use of contactless payment. If not available, minimize contact and sanitize hands

### Health Protocols for Your Retail Facilities

- Regularly and frequently clean and disinfect any commonly touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, tables, chairs, and restrooms
- Disinfect any items that come into contact with customers

- Make hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, soap and water, or similar disinfectant readily available to employees and customers
- Visibly placed signage at the retailer to remind everyone of the best hygiene practices.

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## Health Protocols for Your Retail Employees

- Train all employees on appropriate cleaning and disinfection, how to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases by washing hands frequently, and covering coughs and sneezes
- Have employees maintain at least 6 ft of separation from other individuals. If such distancing is not possible, then rigorously practice other protective measures including face covering, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, cleanliness, and sanitation.
- Have employees wash or sanitize their hands upon entering the retailer
- If an employer provides a meal for employees, individually package meals for each employees
- Consistent with the actions taken by many retailers across the state, consider having all employees wear cloth face coverings (over the nose and mouth). If available, employees should consider wearing non-medical grade face masks
- Screen employees before coming into the retailer
- Send home any employee who has any of the following new or worsening signs or symptoms of possible COVID-19:
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Chills
  - Repeated shaking with chills
  - Muscle pain
  - Headache
  - Sore throat
  - Loss of taste or smell
  - Diarrhea
  - Feeling feverish or a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0° F
  - Known close contact with a person who is lab confirmed to have COVID-19
- Do not allow employees with the new or worsening signs or symptoms listed to return to work until:  
If the employee **is diagnosed with COVID-19**, they may return to work when all three of the following criteria are met:
  - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
  - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery (having no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)
  - The individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
- If the employee has COVID-19 symptoms and does not get tested or evaluated by a medical professional, the individual is assumed to have COVID-19. The individual may not return to work until the individual has completed the same three-step criteria listed above
- If the employee or volunteer has symptoms that could be COVID-19 and wants to return to work before completing the above self-isolation period, the individual must obtain a medical professional's note clearing the individual to return to work based on an alternative diagnosis.
- Do not allow an employee with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14 days self-quarantine period from the last date of exposure (with an exception granted for healthcare workers and critical infrastructure workers)

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