

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR RETAIL BUSINESSES AND SHOPPING MALLS – STEP 3

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The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) is currently at Step 3 of the province's [Roadmap to Reopen](#). This document provides guidance for retail (essential and non-essential) businesses and indoor shopping malls that are at Step 3 by following [Ontario Regulation, 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3](#) (O. Reg 364/20) under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Approach to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#). All business and organizations in the County of Simcoe and District of Muskoka must also adhere to the SMDHU's medical officer of health's [letter of instruction](#).

CAPACITY LIMITS

In Step 3, the owner/operator of each retail business, mall, shopping centre and personal care services business must post a sign in a conspicuous location visible to the public that states the [maximum capacity](#) they are permitted to operate based on the following:

RETAIL (INCLUDING NON-ESSENTIAL RETAIL, ESSENTIAL RETAIL, DISCOUNT AND BIG BOX STORES, AND PERSONAL CARE SERVICES)

Permitted at an indoor capacity limited to the number of patrons that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the establishment. This includes stores and personal care services businesses inside shopping malls. There are no restrictions on the goods that can be sold. Post [maximum capacity](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen.

How to Calculate Capacity

All retail businesses, including non-essential retail, essential retail, discount stores, big box stores and personal care services businesses are to calculate their capacity as follows:

- The maximum capacity number is limited to the number of patrons in the place of business or facility able to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the business or facility (i.e., one person per four square metres).

SHOPPING MALLS

Shopping malls are permitted to open at [Step 3](#) of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#) at an indoor capacity limited to the number of patrons that can maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the establishment. See further instructions below regarding calculating capacity for indoor shopping malls.

Capacity limits for the mall must be [posted](#) at each entrance of the shopping mall and in a conspicuous location at each retail and personal care services business operating within the malls that is visible to the public (i.e. the entrance to the business).

How to Calculate Capacity

- The maximum capacity is limited to the number of patrons in the shopping mall able to maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from every other person in the public areas of the shopping mall (i.e., one person per four square metres).
- The total number of patrons in the shopping mall structure at any one time must not exceed the total capacity determined by taking the sum of the capacities of every business in the mall in addition to the public areas of the shopping mall.

FURTHER REQUIREMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SHOPPING MALLS

- Indoor dining spaces inside the shopping mall, including any tables and seating in food courts, as well as any restaurants, bars and other food and drink establishments within a shopping mall may operate in compliance with [O. Reg. 364/20](#). For additional instruction and guidance regarding food premises and food service operation in Step 3, please see [SMDHU's COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Food Premises](#).

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- Patrons who enter the shopping mall must not be permitted to loiter in any area of the shopping mall.
 - Personal care services may open inside a shopping mall in Step 3. See SMDHU's [website](#) for more information about the additional public health measures required for these settings.
- Recommend to patrons that just one member of the family (e.g., one adult) do the shopping where possible.
- Adjust operating hours to control the number of people permitted in the mall or shopping centre at one time.
- Monitor entrances to control the number of people entering at any given time.
 - Restrict and/or direct the flow of people into, throughout, and exiting (e.g., designate some doors for entry or exit to avoid two-way traffic, designate some hallways for one-way traffic with signs and floor decals).
 - Encourage patrons to exit as quickly as possible following completion of their shopping/transactions.
- Assign employees or security to assist with ensuring physical distancing in high-traffic areas.
- Remove or separate seating in shared spaces to at least 2 metres (6 feet) apart.
- Limit the number of people in washrooms to one at a time for washrooms where physical distancing is not possible. Close toilets or urinals that are less than 2 metres (6 feet) apart without barriers between them.
- Consider installing plexiglass or other physical barriers, in particular where physical distancing cannot be maintained or will be difficult, such as at information kiosks. To be effective, the barrier must be large enough to create a shield between people on either side.
 - No member of the public may be permitted to line up or congregate **outside** the mall, or for an outdoor attraction or feature, unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons inside or outside the mall.
 - No member of the public may be permitted to line up or congregate **inside** the mall unless they are:
 - maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons, and
 - wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose, and chin, unless they are entitled to any of the exceptions set out in subsection 2 (4) of Schedule 1 of [O. Reg. 364/20](#).
 - Consider ways to support populations at greater risk, such as dedicated hours.
 - Offer online or telephone food and grocery orders with delivery or pick-up services as alternatives to shopping in person. It is recommended that music not be played at the shopping mall at a decibel level that exceeds the level at which normal conversation is possible.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL BUSINESSES IN THIS SECTOR

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Do not hand out any coupons, samples, testers, or flyers.
- Remove soft/porous items that are difficult to clean and disinfect, such as upholstery, cushions, and rugs.
- Maintain and enhance heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems [as recommended](#).
- It is recommended that music not be played at a decibel level that exceeds the level at which normal conversation is possible.

SAFETY PLAN

- A [safety plan](#) must be written and available on request. A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous location where it can be viewed by staff and patrons. This requirement pertains to all businesses within an indoor shopping mall and for the mall as well.
- The safety plan shall describe the implementation of public health measures in the location, including, but not limited to screening, physical distancing, masks/face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, the wearing of personal protective equipment and preventing and controlling crowding.
- Additional guidance on how to develop your safety plan can be found [here](#).

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SCREENING AND RECORD KEEPING

- [self-screening signs](#) must be posted at all entrances to each business and mall to ensure the public understands their responsibilities.
- All staff must be [actively screened](#) before attending work each day. Please see the letter of [instruction](#) from the SMDHU's medical officer of health for direction on screening workers.
- Shopping malls, essential retail and non-essential retail businesses are not required to actively screen patrons in Step 3 but must continue to actively screen staff.
- Staff and patrons should conduct a COVID-19 [self-assessment](#) before attending the facility and follow the direction provided. If they have COVID-19 [symptoms](#), they are to stay home, seek testing, and [self-isolate](#).
- The Province of Ontario has implemented a [website for all categories of screening, including of workers and patrons](#).
- In Step 3, personal care services business are required to [actively screen](#) patrons as well as staff.
- It is further required that operators keep a contact log for ALL patrons attending a personal care service, including a first and last name, as well as a telephone number (or e-mail address). This log shall be in the custody of the facility and not be accessible to the public.
 1. maintain log records for at least one month.
 2. only disclose records to a medical officer of health or a public health inspector.

USE OF MASKS, FACE COVERINGS AND EYE PROTECTION

- Every person indoors for a permitted reason shall wear a mask or [face covering](#) unless exemptions apply as set out in [O. Reg 364/20](#).
- Masks can only be removed indoors:
 - to eat and drink, while seated
 - health and safety reasons
- Staff are required to wear a medical mask and approved eye protection when within 2 metres (6 feet) of someone who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose, and chin.
- Post signs encouraging people to dispose of used masks safely in garbage bins.

LINE-UPS (INDOORS AND OUTDOORS)

- The person responsible for a business or place that is open must not permit patrons to line up or congregate **outside** of the business or place, or at an outdoor attraction or feature within the business or place, unless they maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons. This includes patrons lining up outside a mall or waiting to enter a retail business or personal care service with an outside public entrance.
- The person responsible for a business or place that is open must not permit patrons to line up inside an **indoor** part of the business or place unless they are maintaining a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from other groups of persons **and** are wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose, and chin (unless entitled to any exceptions). This includes patrons lining up inside a mall to enter a business that is permitted to open in Step 3.

HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE

- Encourage all patrons to [wash](#) their hands with soap and water or [sanitize](#) their hands using alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content often, especially as they arrive at the retail business/shopping mall.
- Encourage patrons to sneeze and cough into their elbow or use single-use tissues followed by hand hygiene. Post [Cover Your Cough](#) posters in locations where they can be clearly seen around the facility.
- Encourage patrons to avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing posters in high traffic areas.
- Ensure properly stocked, frequently cleaned and disinfected handwash and/or hand sanitizer stations are made available at the entrance and throughout the outdoor facility for everyone to wash/sanitize their hands as required.

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CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- The person responsible for a business or place that is open must ensure that any washrooms, change rooms, or similar amenities made available to the public are cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition as per [provincial direction](#).
- Business hours may need to be adjusted to accommodate enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices.
- Shopping carts and baskets must be sanitized between each patron. Those which cannot be easily sanitized should not be provided (e.g., cloth bags).
- Clean high-touch surfaces such as pay stations, bagging areas, and carts or hand baskets between each patron and use and encourage tap payment over PIN pad use.
- Limit the handling of credit cards and loyalty cards wherever possible by allowing patrons to scan cards themselves.
- Discourage use of touch screens for wayfinding.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) or Natural Product Number (NPN) given and approved by [Health Canada for use against COVID-19](#) and follow manufacturer's directions regarding contact time.
- Increase cleaning and disinfection of all high contact surfaces and surfaces frequently touched (i.e., hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, sneeze guards, restrooms, taps, utensils and dispensers, credit card machines).
- Maintain logs of cleaning and disinfecting.
- Please refer to [Public Health Ontario's fact sheet for cleaning and disinfection for public settings](#) for best practices, including cleaning scheduling and cleaning products.
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow the bundle of infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection, and proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and immunization.
- For personal care services specific cleaning and disinfection requirements and recommendations, visit SMDHU's [website](#).

SIGNAGE

Post signs promoting wearing masks/face coverings, handwashing, physical distancing, and capacity limits and make them visible to staff and patrons. Sample signage can be found [here](#).

OTHER GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Operators should also refer to guidance from the [Government of Ontario](#). The Government of Ontario guidance supplements, but does not replace, guidance from SMDHU about food safety, or the [Ontario Food Premises Regulations](#).

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Health Connection line if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

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While the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit aims to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to, nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional. No one should act, or refrain from acting, based solely upon the materials provided in this guidance, any hypertext links or other general information without first seeking appropriate legal or other professional advice. Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website regularly for updates and additional guidance.