

Guidance for Supermarkets, Food Businesses

This guidance document was developed to assist persons who own, manage or work within food businesses to minimise the risk of transmission of coronavirus to staff members and customers.

Coronavirus is spread via respiratory droplets. These can be spread during sneezing or coughing or when persons interact with each other within a small distance (usually less than one metre). One can become infected by inhaling the virus particles or else by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching one's eyes, nose or mouth.

The symptoms of COVID infection can range from an individual having mild symptoms, to commoner ones which include fever, cough and difficulty breathing or shortness of breath. Other less common symptoms could include headaches, muscle pains, tiredness, vomiting and diarrhoea. Some persons have also reported a change or loss in their sense of smell or a change of their sense of taste.

Research is showing that the virus can survive on different surfaces for variable durations. It is thought that the virus can live on cardboard or copper materials for several hours and it has been found to live on items made of plastic and stainless steel for a few days. The risk of transfer of coronavirus from food or food packaging is currently thought to be low and has not been reported as a confirmed source of contagion. However, there is a theoretical risk. Adopting good hand hygiene practices before and after shopping or handling food items can mitigate this risk.

What can one do ensure that the risk for staff and customers within such establishments is minimised?

General Staff

Ensure that staff with any symptoms remains home and report sick

If any staff member develops any symptom/s suggestive of COVID, they are to immediately call the public health helpline 111 for assistance.

Staff must be provided with adequate facilities to enable them to wash their hands with soap and water regularly. The availability of hand sanitizers containing at least 70% alcohol should be used to complement hand-washing facilities.

Supervisory and management staff are to ensure that the correct hand washing technique is adopted. Posters displaying the correct handwashing technique may be found for download on the following www.covid19health.gov.mt (Annex 1)

If a member of staff assists someone who is taken unwell or whom they come to realise has fever, that staff member is to wash their hands very well for at least 20 seconds after assisting this individual and is to self-isolate until the situation is clarified.

The general use of gloves by employees is not advised since this may inadvertently result in staff stopping to wash their hands less frequently. If the use of gloves is necessary, then a new pair of gloves should be used for each customer, and staff should limit touching other things or surfaces unnecessarily with the same gloves.

Hygiene of Establishment

- Ensure that the general regular cleanliness of the premises using routine household detergents and disinfectants.
- Ensure that regularly touched areas such as counter tops, weighing scales, door handles and switches are regularly disinfected
- Till areas should be disinfected regularly, at least at every cashier change
- Ensure that surfaces that are very regularly touched by customers such as shopping cart handles, fridge door handles and buttons in lifts are disinfected very regularly numerous times per day.
- Buttons on POS machines should regularly be wiped carefully with alcohol or covered with a sheet of plastic (also changed regularly)
- Discourage customers from unnecessary handling of food stuffs ideally touching only those items which they commit to purchase.
- Remind customers to buy only the items that they need.
- Limit 'bring your own container' schemes

Social Distancing

The advice on social distancing applies to everyone. According to the layout and size of the establishment, one must ensure that at any one point in time there is a distance of around 2 metres between persons in the establishment. This is applicable to persons both whilst within the establishment and also outside upon queuing to enter.

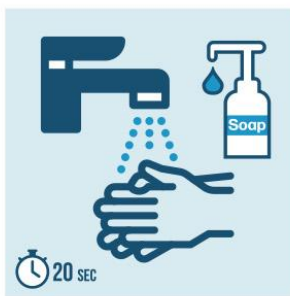
Some measures that can be implemented include:

- Use additional signage asking customers not to enter the shop if they have symptoms. Larger establishments are advised to monitor customers for the presence of fever of more than 37^o Celsius.
- Regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded, and adopt crowd management techniques if necessary.

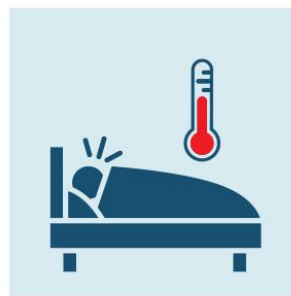
- Use floor markings inside the commercial spaces to facilitate compliance with the social distancing advice of 2 metres, particularly in the most crowded areas such as serving counters and tills
- Use vertical signage to direct customers into lanes if feasible to facilitate movement within the premises while maintaining 2 metre distance
- Remind persons to maintain an adequate distance from one another and encourage them to wash their hands using an appropriate 70% alcohol hand rub
- Use of plexiglass barriers at tills and counters, if possible, is an additional protection for both workers and customers.
- Encourage the use of contactless payments where possible, without disadvantaging older or vulnerable customers
- Provide additional pop-up hand washing stations or facilities if possible, providing soap, water and hand sanitiser
- Provide alcohol wipe dispenser for customers to wipe shopping cart handles before and after use
- Display posters/videos on the importance of hand hygiene and not touching eyes, nose and mouth
- There should be more bins for people to dispose of any used tissues
- Coordinate staff rosters to minimise contact between staff of the different groups
- Minimise contact of staff during break time ensuring that physical distancing is respected at all times

Annex 1

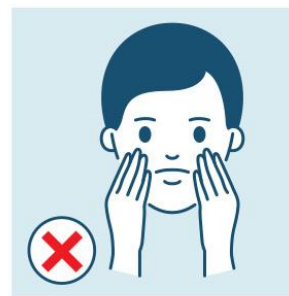
Practice good personal hygiene



WASH your hands regularly with soap and water



STAY home if you are sick



AVOID touching your face with your hands

10 STEPS TO CLEAN YOUR HANDS



1 Wet hands with water



2 Use soap



3 Palm to palm



4 Fingers interlaced



5 Back of hands



6 Base of thumb



7 Fingernails



8 Rotationally rub wrists



9 Rinse hands with water



10 Dry hands with towel