

COVID-19: Returning To Stores and Shopping Centers

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Many people will be venturing back to their favorite retailers and shopping centers as coronavirus restrictions are lifted. The opportunity to shop until you drop and maneuver crowded stores will no longer be the norm for some time. American shopping activity usually involves crowds, trying on clothes, and frequently returning items that prove unsuitable. However, to slow the spread of coronavirus, it is necessary to change the manner in which shopping will take place. As a consumer, you must know how to safely shop to avoid exposing yourself to disease. In addition, it is important to know what steps retailers are required to take to ensure their stores are safe. This fact sheet has been prepared to give you the tools to determine what is acceptable and safe in terms of shopping for you and your family.

Changes Taking Place in Stores after Quarantine

- As reopening moves forward, the occupancy level of people allowed within the stores will increase. For most retailers, occupancy levels may be determined by how many people can be in the store while maintaining social distance of 6 feet. Retail businesses must limit the number of customers present in any given retail business depending on state and local regulations.
- An employee will keep count of the number of people inside most large stores. If the store is at capacity, customers will have to wait outside until they can safely enter the store.
- Stores would probably mark 6 feet of distance between customers, cashiers, and baggers, except at the moment of payment and/or exchange of goods.
- Observe floor decals that indicate appropriate social distancing while waiting in a line, and directional floor decals managing the flow of customers.
- Store restrooms should have increased levels of cleaning and sanitizing. However, make sure to have hand sanitizer as some stores may not have adequate bathroom supplies. Ask about restroom cleaning policies.
- Unless there are individually sealed samples, most cosmetics stores and counters will not allow in store sampling and use of testers.
- It is recommended that dressing rooms be sanitized after each customer's use. Inquire about the processes used to clean dressing rooms prior to shopping.

Tips for Consumers When Shopping After Quarantine

- Consider making purchases online to avoid going into stores for extended periods.
- Masks are still recommended when going into any shopping location.
Better safe than sorry!
- Try to refrain from touching items as you move through the store to avoid contamination.
- When you do have to shop in person, go during hours when fewer people will be there (for example, early morning or late night). If you shop early in the morning, product stocking levels may be better.
- If you are at higher risk for severe illness, find out if the store has special shopping hours for people at higher risk. If the store has special shopping hours for high risk customers, try to shop during those hours. People at higher risk for severe illness include adults 65 or older and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions.
- It is best to use hand sanitizer before and after trying on clothes. Also, keep your mask on while trying on clothes.
- All clothing once tried on should be sanitized by steam cleaning or other methods. Ask about the store policy.
- When possible, pay with cards! Cash passes through many hands and you have no control over its cleanliness.
- Do not purchase any bulk foods, such as nuts or granola, that are in open barrels or other open containers.
- Once back in your car, use hand sanitizer, and when you arrive home wash your hands with soap and water as recommended by the CDC.



References

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