

GOVERNMENT OF PUNJAB
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
Parivar Kalyan Bhawan, Sector 34-A, Chandigarh

No. COVID-19/NHM/Pb/20/1692-96

Date 21 July 2020 Chandigarh

To

1. Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration, Punjab.
2. All Divisional Commissioners, Punjab.
3. All Deputy Commissioners, Punjab.
4. All DHOs, Punjab.
5. All the Civil Surgeons of Punjab.

Subject: Updated Advisory on maintaining and ensuring the safety of food and other essential household items during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Corona virus Disease 2019 (COVID -19) is a systemic disease caused by a novel Corona virus (SARS-CoV-2), transmitted in most instances through respiratory droplets, direct contact with cases and also through contaminated surfaces/objects. Timely and Correct information and knowledge about the corona virus is the key to control the pandemic.

A comprehensive and a detailed advisory on maintaining the hygiene and sanitisation of shops has been issued already. However, a need has been felt to specifically issue the guidelines for the shops selling groceries, cooked food etc. as to allay the apprehensions in the minds of customers on how to handle such essential commodities as also to create awareness amongst the owners in handling food in the context of COVID-19. Advisory regarding safety of food and other essential household items was issued vide letter number No. MD/NHM/2020/3308(R)-3311(R) Dated, Chandigarh the 7th May, 2020 which is now updated as this advisory. With the phased reopening (Unlock-2) to be implemented, following recommendations are given with regard to handling of food and food products.

I. General Advisory

The highlighting features are reiterated below:

1. The shop-owner, delivery staff and customers are advised to wear masks at all the times. The mask should also be worn even if the purchase of groceries or collection of an order takes a fraction of time.

2. The masks shall be worn in a manner that it snugly covers the nose as well as the mouth.
3. The mask, if cloth mask should be washed with soap and water daily after use. If using surgical mask it should be discarded as per procedure. In case an N-95 masks is being worn, it must be used as per maker guidelines/instructions.
4. Face shields, in addition to the face mask, may be used where the workspace is crowded and maintaining a physical distance of 1 meter at all times may not be feasible.
5. The customers are advised not to indulge in any handshakes/hugs even with a known acquaintance. Similarly, the shop-owners/delivery staff should not handshake/hug amongst themselves or with anyone else.
6. All are advised to follow strict social distancing measures and maintain a minimum distance of 1 meter amongst them at all times.
7. The customers and delivery staff are advised to strictly adhere to the social distancing circles or markings laid down by the shopkeepers outside their shop. All should wait patiently for their turn and avoid crowding at all costs.
8. All the shop-owners, customers and delivery staff should meticulously wash their hands using the foot-operated hand washing stations, if available.
9. Wash the hands with soap for at least 40 seconds by applying the soap gently on the palm and back of the hand including web spaces between the fingers and space between the finger and the thumb and the wrist.
10. Alternatively, all the customers and delivery staff is advised to sanitise their hands with the sanitizer bottles mounted at the entry point of the shop premises.
11. Alcohol-based sanitizer (minimum 70% ethyl alcohol v/v) should be mounted at the entrance wall of the shops for the shopkeeper and his/her workers as well as the customers to sanitize their hands before entering the premises further. The sanitizers are to be refilled/replaced frequently. Use a minimum of 3ml of the sanitizer (approximately 2 pushes of sanitizer dispenser) on DRY HANDS for at least 30 seconds for good hygienic hand disinfection.
12. The shop-owners, customers and the delivery staff should not smoke or chew tobacco-based products such as gutka, pan masala etc. in the shop/market places.
13. In case of a cough/sneeze, the shopkeeper/customers/delivery staff should use the handkerchief to cover the face which shall then be kept in his/her own pocket/purse in a manner that the surface of the handkerchief exposed to the cough/sneeze shall not touch the other parts of the belongings directly.

14. In case shopkeeper/customers/delivery staff is not carrying the handkerchief he/she should cough/sneeze into the *flexed/bent elbow*.
15. In either case, the shopkeeper/customers/delivery staff should immediately hand wash with soap in the manner prescribed his hands/other exposed surfaces to cough/sneeze.
16. The shopkeeper/customers/delivery staff should refrain from touching face, mouth, nose and eyes with his hands at all times.
17. The shopkeeper/customers/delivery staff should not spit except when absolutely essential and only in the washbasin of the toilet in the shop/public toilet, which shall then be thoroughly cleaned in the manner prescribed.
18. The shopkeeper/customers/delivery staff should avoid all type of gatherings like social, religious, political etc.
19. The customers should preferably pay through digital means. The shopkeeper/his workers as well the customer shall sanitize their hands immediately before or after cash transactions, if it is so.
20. The shopkeeper/customers/delivery staff should not indulge in gossip/rumours with regard to COVID-19 without verifying the facts. All are encouraged to download "COVA APP" developed by the Government of Punjab for the correct, timely and authentic information.

II. Specific Advisory for the consumers/customers

1. Consumers are advised to carry cloth bags while going out to buy the essentials. The cloth bag should be washed thoroughly with soap and water immediately after use.
2. Consumers are advised to wash all the products/goods with warm water, wherever feasible and then wipe them with a clean cloth.
3. The consumers are advised not to keep any spoiled food in the refrigerators.
4. The consumers should clean their refrigerators regularly thoroughly inside out.
5. The consumers are encouraged to use digital payment methods as a precautionary measure while receiving any delivered grocery or food items.
6. The consumers are advised not to leave any cooked/ready-to-eat food items in open. The consumers are advised to keep all their food items in containers with built-in lids.

III. Specific Advisory for the food handlers

1. Food handlers should wear a clean uniform, gloves, cloth masks/face cover, and head covers at all times.
2. The lockers, if any, for keeping the personal belongings should not be shared.
3. Social distancing of at least 1 meter amongst the staff shall also be ensured inside the food preparation area/kitchen.
4. Food handlers should frequently wash their hands with soap and water. They should wear gloves while handling/preparing food.
5. Food handlers should avoid wearing jewellery, watches etc. within the food premises.
6. The food handlers are advised to clean and disinfect the food service area after every meal is prepared. The spillage, if any, should be wiped clean.
7. Disinfect high-contact points such as working counters, door knobs, equipment handles, billing counters, card machines etc. repeatedly.
8. Food handlers must use tongs, gloves or other utensil to prevent direct contact with food.
9. The food handlers are advised to avoid displaying any cooked/ready-to-eat food items in open or glass windows.
10. All food handlers must be pre-screened for the symptoms of COVID-19. Any food handler showing any symptom should be isolated and the nearest medical facility should be informed. Act as per the medical advise and such staff be encouraged to stay at home.
11. High contact surfaces such as handrails / handles and call buttons, public counters, intercom systems, equipment like telephone, printers/scanners, and other office machines should be cleaned twice daily by mopping with a linen/absorbable cloth soaked in 1% sodium hypochlorite. Frequently touched areas like table tops, chair handles, pens, diary files, keyboards, mouse, mouse pad, tea/coffee dispensing machines etc. should specially be cleaned.
12. Hand-washing facility should be available, preferably, at the entry gate of the retail premises to assist the delivery staff or the customer (in case of a pick-up) to wash their hands thoroughly. Ensure availability of soap at all times and social distancing of at least 1meter for the persons waiting for their turn to hand-wash.

