

Guide for Supermarkets to Standardise COVID-19 Prevention

Introduction

It is increasingly recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic may last 1 to 2 years. It is expected that COVID-19 cases will rebound episodically and we will have to control each 'wave' until it gradually fades over time. Hence retail outlets, especially supermarkets, will have to adjust to this situation and continue to maintain a safe environment for shoppers and staff.

Supermarkets play an important role in COVID-19 prevention.

Many supermarkets have put in place measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 at their premises. However, as the Movement Control Order is relaxed, and client numbers increase, supermarkets will have to be even more vigilant.

This guide aims to help standardise the measures to be taken by all supermarkets, as well as offer ideas and initiatives that could be taken.

Attention to detail and adherence to a strong routine of standardised measures will help us through these difficult times.

	Issues	Critical to Implement (No Compromise)	If Possible, Good to also Implement
	Staff Safety		
1.	Staff Training and Retraining	<p>Supermarkets should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct training of ALL staff (cleaners, security personnel, and floor, clerical & admin staff) on COVID-19 safety and prevention issues. • Conduct retraining on a regular basis (bi-weekly in the next six months, and then monthly). • Conduct periodically an on-site test-run of standard hygiene routines for COVID-19 prevention routines. • Ensure a system throughout the work day that checks and maintains sufficient daily supply of sanitizers and soap, cleaning & disinfectant materials and water supply and sewerage systems are in working order. • Have written guidelines that are prominently displayed for staff at key locations. • Send electronically to all staff members text-cum-audio or video versions of the guidelines in languages that the staff members can easily understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce face-to-face meetings, especially non-essential ones. Conduct meetings via teleconferencing and over emails instead. • Choose online training whenever possible. For essential training that cannot be conducted online, space out seating for participants at least 1 meter apart.

		<p>Focus training on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe physical distancing. • Avoid touching faces. • Prevent crowding by customers. • Limit physical contact. • Keep hands clean at all times: wash hands with soap and water frequently or use hand disinfectant. • Keep surfaces clean at all times: disinfect cash counters conveyor belts and other high contact surfaces frequently. • Ensure staff members all use masks, especially when they are near other people. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure supervisors do spot checks to ensure compliance with established hygiene routines for COVID-19 prevention. 	
2.	Personal, Protective Equipment provided for All Staff and Adequate Stock/Supply	<p>Management should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available personal cloth masks (preferably those with a filter compartment) for use by all staff members for individual use only (not for shared use). • Give each staff member a minimum of 5 masks: for daily use, two masks per day, half way through a shift (at the meal break time) remove used mask correctly, put into a plastic bag, wash hands with soap and water, dry, wear the second clean mask. • Ensure that all staff members dealing directly with customers (e.g., cashiers, security guards, food servers, other customer service personnel, stock replacement assistants) must correctly wear masks at all times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideally a 3-ply surgical mask is more effective, but we need to reserve these for healthcare professionals. If using 3-ply surgical masks, they must be worn correctly and be replaced with a new one if it is very damp or contaminated and once removed, e.g. for meals. They cannot be reused. A good video on using 3-ply surgical masks here. • Consider added protection for higher risk staff (cashiers, security guards): they should also wear safety glasses (with side & top shields) that can be easily cleaned or washed.
3.	Disinfect and Clean Work Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available alcohol-based hand sanitisers for all staff at their work stations and adequate liquid soap in all staff wash & rest rooms and at their work places. • Disposable gloves and plastic bags need to be made available for emergency use to clean up client body fluid spills. • For a list of effective disinfecting solutions against coronavirus for cleaning the supermarket premises see the Appendix below. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider replacing all tap-heads in wash areas and toilets with elbow-operated heads to enable easier hand washing. Foot-operated soap dispensers and door openers would be ideal. • Advise staff to close the toilet seat cover after using and before flushing the toilet, to reduce waste aerosol transmission.
4.	Contactless Payments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supermarkets should expand and make known their range of contactless payment options, especially those based on hand phone applications. Contact-less payment implies no cash or conventional credit card payments; only pay-wave or hand phone applications (eWallets). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be good to have a wide range of payment options, as different shoppers use different contactless payment applications (eWallets).

5.	Staff Meal Times, Breaks & Socialising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff should be encouraged not to socialise in groups at the pantry, corridor or common spaces. Instead, advise staff to confine communication to work-related needs, especially at arrival, lunch or when leaving. • Pantry/meal times should be staggered to reduce the number of staff who can be in a confined space at any one time. Seating arrangements in the pantry and any rest areas should be separated by at least 1 meter. • Staff will have to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wash their hands before and after removing their masks (critical). ✓ Correctly remove their masks to eat/drink. ✓ Sanitize hands before touching any common use serving implements, cups/mugs/cutlery/drink dispenser levers. • Staff should not share food and utensils. • Staff should clean surfaces (tables, chairs) with disinfectant before the next group of staff come in for meals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage staff not to talk unless necessary, whether to customers or among themselves. • It would be good to evaluate the common prayer rooms and ensure that prayer times are staggered and prayer items are not shared (e.g. mats). Staff should be encouraged to bring their own prayer mats. • Individually-packed food is encouraged.
6.	Regular Monitoring & Routine Staff Health Checks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform daily verbal health assessments (any respiratory symptoms) and temperature screening for all staff at arrival to work and when leaving work. • Staff who are unwell should be encouraged to stay at home and inform their respective supervisor/supermarket administrator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once travel restrictions are lifted, obtain routine travel declarations for all staff when they return from leave. • Give all staff who have just returned from overseas mandatory, paid 14-day leave of absence to enable quarantine. • Identify an area/room that can be used to temporarily isolate staff who suddenly become sick while at work, before they are sent home or to hospital as soon as possible.
7.	Home/Family Safety		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff should be encouraged to do the following as soon as they reach home and before interacting with other household members or touching surfaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Immediately shower. ✓ Soak and wash (in soap and water) clothes worn to the work place.
8.	Contact Details of Health Authorities for Emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that staff members can easily access the contact numbers of Local and National Ministry of Health (MOH) Officers at all times for emergencies and advice (see Appendix below). 	

Client Safety		
9. Safe Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit number of shoppers that enter at any one time. Each supermarket (depending on size) should determine how many shoppers should be allowed inside at any one time. • Put up physical and online notices regarding peak and 'quiet' shopping hours in order to minimise the time spent queuing. • With the reduction in number of shoppers at any one time, there will be a corresponding reduction in checkout counters. The staff can be re-deployed to supervise safe physical distancing in the aisles. • As a rule, family shopping visits and children should be discouraged. Each family should have only one member that does the shopping. Single parents with young children or those who have children with a disability may need to bring them along. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One way to determine number of shoppers to be allowed into the premises would be to identify the number of aisles in the supermarket and allocate 2 persons per vertical and horizontal aisle (number of aisles multiplied by 2 = number of people at any one time). • Note that some supermarkets overseas practise a 'one-in one-out' system, for clients once the maximum number is reached. • Shoppers should be given a limited time (45 to 60 minutes) to purchase goods, so as to allow for others waiting outside to enter. • Encourage all shoppers to have in hand their lists of items to be purchased to speed up the process.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate priority shopping time slots (i.e. have specific shopping hours) dedicated for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Persons aged 60 years and older. ✓ Persons with disabilities. ✓ Persons who have chronic illnesses. ✓ Caregivers shopping for households with disabled, elderly or persons with chronic illnesses (all of whom cannot manage to do supermarket shopping or online shopping by themselves and need someone else to help do it for them). ✓ Single parents with children under 12 years of age. ✓ Single parents with children with disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for staff assistance to support the priority shoppers by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Guiding shoppers efficiently to collect items on their lists. ✓ Picking up items from the shelves, placing items for billing and packing items purchased. ✓ Pushing shopping trolleys, especially as some shoppers might use mobility aides (e.g. canes, walking frames, wheelchairs). ✓ Reading out expiry dates and prices to persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate, on the floor inside the supermarket either as directional strips or circles, one to two (1 to 2) meter distance markers for shoppers to follow. • Have a separate entrance and exit for shoppers. • Display clearly the prices and expiry dates of items to reduce touching of goods by shoppers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce directional floor markings to encourage safe movement around the supermarket. • For butchers and weighing sections there should also be distancing with markers and put an extension tape to allow one way in and one way out.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate, on the floor outside the supermarket, one to two (1 to 2) meter distance markers for queuing of shoppers prior to their turn to enter. 	

10.	Hand Washing & Disinfection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make available alcohol-based hand sanitisers to clients on entry to the supermarket and on departing. • Make available adequate liquid soap in all public toilets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider replacing all taps-heads in public toilets with elbow-operated heads (or sensor based taps) to reduce infection risk via tap use. • Foot-operated soap dispensers would be ideal. • Shoppers should be discouraged from wearing gloves, as this gives a false sense of security. With gloves on, shoppers may touch many surfaces, becoming a risk to others.
11.	Masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require all shoppers to wear masks while queuing and when in the supermarket. 	
12.	Temperature Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform temperature screening at the supermarket entrance for all shoppers. • Use non-contact thermometers (temperature scans). • Any client with a temperature of 37.5°C and above should be asked to rest at home and not enter the supermarket. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the staff members responsible for supervising thermometer use, check each morning the thermometer calibration and range of normal temperature readings for proper thermometer use, in accordance with the thermometer manual.
13.	Cleaning Routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all supermarket trolleys and baskets are fully disinfected at the end of each work day. • After use by each shopper, the trolley handle/basket handle should be wiped with an alcohol-based (60-70%) disinfectant. • Floors should be cleaned at least once a day at the end of each work day. • Make available foot-operated bins with covers at the supermarket entrance and exit for use by shoppers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note that some supermarkets overseas have clearing stations at the front of stores to routinely sanitise every trolley on exit of each client. • Remove all 'unnecessary items' from the supermarket to avoid having to clean them or have them contaminated (including reading materials, and other communally-used objects). • Keep items pinned on soft boards to a bare minimum of essential health messages. • If there are any chairs in the supermarket: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mark out fixed seats that are 1 meter from other seats. ✓ Place movable chairs at a minimum of 1 meter distance apart. ✓ Invest in plastic chairs that can be disinfected after use by each person.

Alternative Shopping Options		
14.	Change Shopping Methods to Offer Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop or grow online shopping and home delivery services to meet demand. • Establish a comprehensive 'drive-by-pick-up-shopping' service. Goods are ordered online, by a hand phone application or even by a short messaging system and customers just drive by to pick-up supplies. Payment is online or contactless. • Rethink placement of and signage for items most in demand based on sales during the COVID-19 period (e.g., rice, noodles, milk, soap, detergent, bread) for faster, easier client access. • Prepack commonly-purchased items for quick pick up (e.g. rice, bread).
Other Suggestions to Consider		
15.	Free Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider offering free parking to all clients to avoid contact with parking coupons, entry, payment and exit buttons. • Or consider a minimal flat parking fee upon payment for goods.
16.	Extension of Shopping Hours & Recruiting More Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the Movement Control Order has been lifted, it may be necessary to extend shopping hours, as the permitted number of customers in the supermarket during any one time slot has to be limited. • Increased staff recruitment will be required to support longer hours, as well as to ensure staff do not work excessively long hours wearing a mask.

Appendices

Effective Disinfecting Solutions against Coronavirus for Cleaning the Environment

For routine cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and objects, wear disposable gloves and use household bleach diluted with water (1:100 ratio, e.g. 10ml bleach to 1 litre water) or alcohol solutions with at least 60-70% alcohol. For effective disinfecting solution against coronavirus refer to this [cleaning and disinfecting guideline from CDC USA](#)) and this [Interim List of Household Products and Active Ingredients for Disinfection of the COVID-19 Virus](#) from the National Environment Agency, Singapore and our local MOH guide: Guidelines COVID-19 management version 5/2020 by MOH, a PowerPoint update reproduced below.

Active Ingredients and Their Working Concentrations Effective Against Coronaviruses



Active Ingredient (A.I.)
Accelerated hydrogen peroxide (0.5%) ^a
Benzalkonium chloride* (0.05%) ^b
Chloroxylenol (0.12%) ^c
Ethyl alcohol (70%) ^d
Iodine in iodophor (50 ppm) ^b
Isopropanol (50%) ^b
Povidone-iodine (1% iodine) ^d
Sodium hypochlorite (0.05 – 0.5%) ^{d, e}
Sodium chlorite (0.23%) ^b

Source: NEA, Singapore

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List of Household Disinfectants / Cleaning Products Effective Against COVID-19



Product Name	Active Ingredients
CIF Power & Shine Multipurpose Anti-Bac Spray 700ml	Benzalkonium chloride (0.75%)
CIF Professional All Purpose Cleaner	Benzalkonium chloride (0.75%)
CIF Professional Disinfectant Floor Cleaner 5L	Benzalkonium chloride (1.2-1.4%)
Clorox Disinfectant Wipes	Benzalkonium chloride (0.184%)
Clorox Scentiva Disinfecting Multi-Surface Cleaner (Various Scents)	Benzalkonium chloride (0.3%)
Dettol Anti-bacterial Surface Cleanser Trigger Spray	Benzalkonium chloride (0.096%)
Magiclean Floor Cleaner (Various Scent)	Benzalkonium chloride (0.7%)
Magiclean Wiper Wet Sheets	Benzalkonium chloride (0.05%)
Mr Muscle Multi-Purpose Cleaner (Various Scents)	Benzalkonium chloride (0.1-0.5%)
Dettol Antiseptic Disinfectant Liquid	Chloroxylenol (4.8%)
Dettol Antiseptic Germicide	Chloroxylenol (4.8%)
Clorox All Purpose Cleaner with Bleach	Sodium hypochlorite (2.4%)
Clorox Bleach Original	Sodium hypochlorite (5.25%)
Clorox Clean-Up All-Purpose Cleaner with Bleach (Various Scents)	Sodium hypochlorite (2.4%)
Clorox Clean-Up Cleaner + Bleach	Sodium hypochlorite (1.84%)

Source: NEA, Singapore

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Important Contact Numbers of Local and National Ministry of Health Officers

If you have a COVID19 emergency or need advice call the State Crisis Preparedness and Response Centres (CPRCs) or the National CPRC at 03-88810200, 03-88810600, 03-88810700 or email cprc@moh.gov.my

Appendix 1

Contact Details for the State-level Crisis Preparedness and Response Centres

	State	Working hours	Telephone	Email
1	Perlis	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	04-3766317
		After Office hours or Public Holiday (PH)		019-2780408 019-4001070
2	Kedah	Sunday - Wednesday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	04-7746081
		Thursday	8.00 - 3.30 pm	04-7746063
		Friday, Saturday & PH	8.00 - 12.00 pm	04-7746072
3	Pulau Pinang	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	04-2629602
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	10.00 - 2.00 pm	
4	Perak	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	05-2433962
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	10.00 - 2.00 pm	
5	Selangor	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	03-51237251
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	9.00 - 2.00 pm	03-51237252
6	JKWPKL	Monday - Friday	7.30 - 5.30 pm	03-26977710 03-26977730
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	11.00 - 3.00 pm	03-26983757
		Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	06-7641326
7	Negeri Sembilan	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	8.00 - 5.00 pm	
8	Melaka	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	06-2883019 06-2345998
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	10.00 - 2.00 pm	06-2883019
		Sunday - Wednesday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	07-238 2217
9	Johor	Thursday	8.00 - 3.30 pm	07-236 3305
		Monday - Friday	9.00 - 5.00 pm	09-570 7910 09-570 7914 09-570 7909
10	Pahang	Monday - Friday	9.00 - 5.00 pm	09-570 7910 09-570 7914 09-570 7909
		Sunday - Wednesday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	09-619 6269
11	Terengganu	Thursday	8.00 - 3.30 pm	09-635 3752
		Friday, Saturday & PH	9.00 - 3.30 pm	
		Sunday - Wednesday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	09-747 2089
12	Kelantan	Thursday	8.00 - 3.30 pm	
		Friday, Saturday & PH	8.00 - 12.00 pm	
		Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	088-219455 088-512531 088-512533
13	Sabah	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	
		Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	082-443248
14	Sarawak	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	9.00 - 3.00 pm	
15	WP Labuan	Monday - Friday	8.00 - 5.00 pm	087-410973 016-9195425
		Saturday, Sunday & PH	8.00 - 1.00 pm	016-9195426

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