



Home Medical Equipment Dealers Association of BC

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COVID-19 Guidance to Home Medical Equipment Providers

As we continue efforts to manage and contain the COVID-19 pandemic, home medical equipment providers (retailers) play an essential service in every community by ensuring safe and reliable access to equipment, supplies, other related products and services.

At the same time, it is crucial that everyone – including the medical equipment supply sector – to adjust how they operate, helping to prevent transmission of COVID-19. It is particularly important to incorporate processes ensuring physical distancing in all parts of retail locations and client residences as physical distancing is the primary means of preventing community spread of COVID-19.

This guidance document outlines key steps to put in place for physical distancing and good hygiene practice in your premises.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Place multiple signs near entrances informing customers of the physical distancing methods being used in your facility. This may include the number of customers the facility can accommodate inside at a time. Multiple signs help customers maintain physical distance as they read them. Consider having a store representative in place to direct customers. A suggested amount of clients in a typical 1000-2,000 SF showroom is 2.
- Use physical queue line controls such as crowd control cones or ropes at entrances and, where warranted, in check-out lines inside the stores.
- Place markers such as tape or cones every 2 metres to provide customers with visible cues that support physical distancing; use these in the entrance waiting line, near check-outs, and near products that may draw numerous people. Alternatively, consider providing an attendant to support customers in high traffic areas.
- Add one-way arrows to the floor or shelving of aisles, so that customers move in one direction down aisles. This minimizes the need for customers to pass each other in aisles and makes it easier for customers to physically distance.
- Allow only one customer (or customer and companions, e.g. children) at a check-out at a time.
- Encourage cashiers to step back from customers when customers use card readers if the card-reader cannot be relocated 2 metres away from the cashier.
- To minimize physical contact between people, offer online or telephone orders with delivery or pick up services as alternatives to shopping in person.

SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- Enhance and adhere to the premise's sanitation plan and schedule, and ensure staff are practicing proper hygiene. This includes frequent hand washing, coughing or sneezing into an elbow rather than a hand or the environment, and avoiding touching one's face.
- High sneeze guards (Plexi glass) have been installed at check-outs in many stores; this best-practice should be considered to protect cashiers in the stores who encounter customers.
- Ensure washrooms are well stocked with liquid soap, paper towels and toilet paper. Ensure warm running water is available. Antibacterial soap is not required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Make disinfectant wipes and trash bins available for wiping display products and other high-touch surfaces and for disposing of used wipes.
- Place hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol in dispensers near doors, payment stations and other high-touch locations for customer and staff use. If alcohol-based sanitizer is not available, do not substitute an alcohol-free sanitizer.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces such as check-outs, ideally between each customer and use.
- Cashiers should limit the handling of credit cards wherever possible, allowing customers to scan or tap their cards and handle card readers themselves. Encourage tap payment over pin pad use.
- There is currently no evidence that communicable diseases, including COVID-19 can be passed on through touching or handling cash.
- Employees who handle cash must wash their hands with soap and water before preparing food.
- Operators and employees who choose to use gloves, must ensure thorough hand washing before and after each change of gloves. Gloves must be changed regularly. For example, gloves must be changed after visiting the toilet, eating or other activity according to store hand washing policy. Hands should also be frequently washed even when wearing gloves.
- Post signs advising customers who arrive with cold, influenza, or COVID-19 like symptoms to return home and use a delivery service instead.
- Ensure staff with cold, influenza, or COVID-19 like symptoms such as sore throat, fever, sneezing, and coughing remain at home.

CALCULATING AND MAINTAINING THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN A STORE TO SUPPORT PHYSICAL DISTANCING:

- It is challenging to calculate the number of people that can be in a store while practicing physical distancing. Nevertheless, it is critical to evaluate how many people can reasonably be in a store and easily practice physical distancing of 2 metres between people to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- It is strongly recommended that store operators have 5 square metres of unencumbered retail floor space per person, i.e. 5 square metres/person.
- Unencumbered space would be retail floor space minus floor space used for fittings/displays.
- Monitor the number of customers and staff entering and leaving the store. Once the maximum number of persons for a store is reached, allow one person in for every person that leaves.

Separate incoming and outgoing customer flows if possible.

- Evaluate whether people can easily practice physical distancing with the calculated number of people in the store. Evaluate specific areas of the store where it may be a challenge to practice physical distancing.
- Consider asking customers about their experience of physical distancing in the store and how to improve the ability to practice physical distancing within and outside the store.

PROCESSING OF DEMONSTRATION (TRIAL) PRODUCTS

- Products for Trial need to be separately labelled/barcoded and kept separate from new product in your store/warehouse.
- Dealers must train their staff on safe handling of trial equipment ie: equipment must be handled while wearing clean gloves at all times.
- Products provided to anyone for use as a 'loaner' or for any other reason must be thoroughly sanitized upon arrival back at the store location.
- Trial equipment returned to your location must be received to a warehouse area sectioned off for cleaning so that ALL returning items can be thoroughly cleaned.
- Dealers MUST have written cleaning procedures and cleaning equipment as needed to ensure sanitation is achieved (ie: Industrial wheelchair washers) with use of appropriate cleaners for complete sanitization.
- To prevent cross-contamination, new and trial equipment should not be returned to the store in the same vehicle. Alternatively, returning trial equipment must be individually bagged and sealed prior to being loaded into a vehicle.
- To maintain sanitization, do not trial bathroom safety equipment.
- Mattresses, cushions, backrests and other soft goods will require enhanced cleaning procedures.
- Following cleaning, items should not be re-loaned for at least 48 hours.

PRODUCT DELIVERIES TO CLIENT HOME/FACILITY AND PROPER USE OF PPE

- Before arranging delivery, dealers should ask the client questions regarding COVID 19 to minimize risk to staff and customers, ie; Does anyone in the home have COVID 19? Is anyone in Quarantine? Is anyone in the home feeling sick? Best-practice suggests dealer will have standardized calling format to ensure worker and client safety
- When delivering items that do not require setup, these items should be delivered "to the door" and not delivered to the client resident's room, thereby minimizing worker/patient exposure. Deliveries where dealer staff have no patient/client direct contact do NOT require dealer staff to wear PPE.
- For items requiring direct patient/client contact and setup (ie: complex wheelchairs/beds) all workers must wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). At the time of writing this document, patient/client contact PPE includes 1) Gloves 2) Face mask 3) Booties on shoes.

- If there is a known COVID 19 outbreak in a home or facility to be visited, dealer must consider wearing enhanced PPE. In ALL cases, dealer staff must be familiar with and follow guidance as provided by BC Health Authorities regarding when and where essential workers must wear PPE.
- For the latest advice regarding worker and workplace safety visit <https://www.safecarebc.ca/covid19/>

PRODUCT RETURNS

- Due to enhanced infection control practices, and in accordance with guidance from Health Canada related to COVID 19, Dealers must not accept returns of any products purchased. There is no safe way to clean equipment and then resell as new. All items are final sale and may not be restocked or returned.

SAMPLE - COVID 19 SHOWROOM POLICY – IN-HOUSE CLIENT VISITS

When clients come into the showroom and/or request use of in-house trial room and/or request to use in-house equipment, staff are directed to follow this procedure to safely clean the showroom, equipment trial room and previously handled equipment following a client visit.

- 1) Sales rep and/or Customer Service Rep MUST be present and watch carefully to observe all equipment a client touches including walkers, wheelchairs, scooters, canes, lift-chairs, etc. Each piece of equipment touched must be put aside for cleaning immediately following each client showroom visit.
- 2) After the client leaves, wipe down equipment client has touched using anti-bacterial wipes containing at least 60% alcohol formulation.
- 3) For beds and mattresses, each bed will have a sign that states “Equipment clean and sanitary on one side of the sign and “This product requires cleaning” on the flip side. If the client has contacted/used that bed, turn the sign over so that it shows the ‘requires cleaning’ message. Following the client meeting, if there are sheets on that bed, strip the bed and machine-laundry. If the bed has no sheets, wipe down bed using anti-bacterial wipes containing at least 60% alcohol formulation.
- 4) For lift chairs, each lift chair must have a disposal sheet covering. In the event a client uses the lift chair, strip the chair, dispose of the sheet and replace.
- 5) During the cleaning process, please wear gloves and mask.

The customer service rep or sales rep working with clients in the showroom is responsible for safe handling and cleaning of equipment. That person must be responsible for identifying equipment requiring cleaning and/or removal and disposal protective sheets.

Use of fitting room

Fitting room space is to be used only by sales reps working with a client/therapist. When the room use is finished, put a “Room to be Cleaned” sign on the door and notify appropriate staff that the trial room and all equipment in it requires cleaning. All medical equipment plus lifts, slings, hard surfaces, plinth/bed etc must be sanitized after each room is use.

GENERAL ADVICE FOR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS ABOUT COVID-19 AND FOR THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE COLD, INFLUENZA, OR FLULIKE SYMPTOMS:

- The toll-free number for non-medical information related to COVID-19, such as travel recommendations and physical distancing is 1-888-COVID19. Texts can also be sent to 604-630-0300.
- Persons experiencing cold, influenza, or COVID-19 like symptoms should self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days after symptoms begin and until symptoms, including fever, resolve.
- The BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool can be found at <https://covid19.thrive.health>. Encourage those with medical questions to call 8-1-1 and seek appropriate medical advice. The BC COVID-19 app is available at:

iPhone: <https://apps.apple.com/ca/app/BC-COVID-19-Support/id1502907052>

Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=ca.bc.gov.health.hlbc.COVID19>

- For more information, see <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/employers-businesses/food-businesses>
- Employers should reassess their work environment every day and keep updated with the information posted on the Province's website: www.gov.bc.ca/COVID19