

How to navigate the grocery store in the time of COVID-19

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As many cities and states shut down all non-essential businesses and activities for the foreseeable future due to COVID-19, one place that is still open for business is the grocery store.

[Dr. Minhaj Husain](#), infectious disease specialist at Aurora Health Care, says that shoppers and grocery store workers both have a higher risk of coming in contact with the virus simply because there are so many people around.

Whether you're one of the many heroic workers continuing to fill these vital roles or you're going out to shop, Dr. Husain offers these tips to stay safe.

How should people shop for food differently?

Avoid touching anything you are not intending to buy. This applies to everything, including meat, produce and non-perishable items.

What precautions should grocery store workers take?

Workers are at a higher risk of exposure, because they are still working and interacting with customers. They need to take all the right precautions to stay safe and minimize their risk. This includes:

- Staying home if they are sick
- Avoiding physical contact with customers or other employees
- Washing their hands and avoiding face touching
- Keeping at least six feet of separation with everyone around them

How can shoppers practice social distancing?

- Pay for groceries with a credit card or cell phone app. This will avoid the need to touching cash and potentially making contact between customer and cashier during purchase
- Use self-checkout options or in-store pick up if available
- Maintain six feet of separation with shoppers around them. Many stores have placed tape on the floor near checkout lanes to help people keep their distance.

What do customers need to change about their behaviors?

Since the virus lives on different surfaces for varied amounts of time, it's important to wipe down groceries with alcohol wipes after bringing them home. If you have a cough, wear a mask at the store. Use hand sanitizer and wash your hands before, during and after you shop. And most importantly, if you are sick, do not go out in public, whether it is to the grocery store or anywhere else.

What measures can stores take to protect their workers?

- Encourage sick employees to stay at home
- Conduct regular huddles to remind employees of safe and hygienic practices

- Make sure the ventilation system is working appropriately and there is adequate fresh air coming through
- Sanitize high contact areas such as door handles, carts and cash registers on a continuous basis
- Place large hand sanitizer bottles at the entrance and have a greeter remind all customers to sanitize before entering the store.

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