

# COVID-19 HEALTH GUIDELINES FOR INFORMAL TRADERS

(in streets, markets and home shops)

## COVID-19 is highly infectious.

It spreads through contact with people who already have the virus – even those who do not show symptoms – or from touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your eyes, mouth or nose. COVID-19 sticks to surfaces – cardboard, plastic, wood, metal and money. It can survive for up to five days.

**Research shows that informal operators are key to the food security of low-income households. Many countries have recognised this and declared informal food traders essential service providers.**

If you show the following symptoms, you may have COVID-19, which means it is not safe for you to be at work and you can make others sick:

Cough



Fever



Sore throat



Shortness of breath



Most people infected with COVID-19 are able to recover at home. If you have any of these symptoms, seek medical attention. Call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

The World Health Organisation provides regularly updated advice for the public [here](#).

## STAY AT HOME:

**Doctors advise staying at home, if you can. This is why direct income support from national government to all informal workers is critical.**

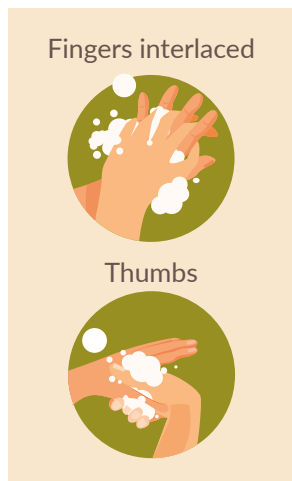
Elderly people are particularly at risk if they contract the virus. If you are elderly or live with elderly people (those over 60), you should stay at home.

If you are unwell with an existing condition, or older than 60, you should ask someone else to run your business for you during the COVID-19 epidemic.



## IF YOU ARE AT WORK AS AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE PROVIDER:

▶ **If safety guidelines are followed, informal traders can trade as safely as supermarkets.**



1

### **Wash your hands with soap and water often:**

- **Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.** Clean all parts of your hands and fists, washing between fingers and fingertips and halfway up your forearms.
- **Wash your hands before you start your workday,** throughout the day, and especially before eating.
- **Wash your hands after coughing or sneezing.**
- **Wash your hands after touching any object** that others regularly touch.
- **Wash your hands as soon as you get home.**



2

**Avoid touching your face – especially your eyes, mouth and nose. When you cough or sneeze, cover your face with the inside of your elbow.**



3

**Wear a cloth mask that covers your mouth and nose. Avoid touching the mask.** Wash and iron after use. Have a few masks so that you always have a clean one to wear. Encourage customers to wear masks too.



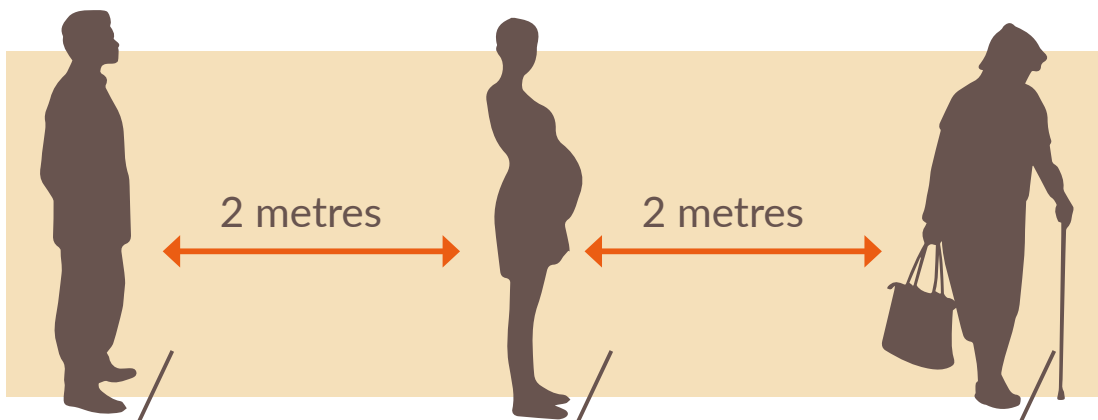
4

**Avoid touching people. Do not greet people by touching them.** Keep two metres away from people. Where this is impossible, then at least keep at arm's length.

**5** **Street and market traders need to trade two metres apart**, so local governments need to be flexible with trader layouts and locations.

**6** **Customers should keep two metres distance from each other, by queueing alongside trader/market stalls or outside spazas.**

Drawing lines on the ground is a simple way to show how people should queue and how far they should stay from you and your stall/shop.



**7** **Give priority to high-risk customers** (such as pensioners, people with disabilities and pregnant women) by giving them preference in queues.

**8** **Ask customers not to touch products (as far as possible).**



**9 Clean all frequently touched surfaces,** including your cell phone, and also door handles and railings.

**10 Street and market traders:** Clean your tables and products with disinfectant.

**House shop owners and employees:**

Wipe down surfaces such as countertops, tills and handles with disinfectant. Provide sanitiser for customers entering and leaving if possible.

**11 Avoid handling cash:** Encourage customers to deposit cash in a box or jar. Coins can be dropped into a soapy/bleach solution first. Use sanitiser between customers.

Use digital payment methods where possible. Consider signing up for [Snapscan](#). If you have card payment facilities, like Yoco, iKhokha, FLASH and bank card machines, clean these with bleach solution before and after each use.

**12 Recycled plastic bags can carry the virus.** If customers use their own bags, avoid touching them. If you provide plastic bags, avoid recycled ones.

## How to make your own disinfectant:

If you do not have sanitisers, 1 cup of bleach in 6 cups of water is an effective disinfectant.



## How to build a wash station:

Consider [building a wash station](#) if you do not have running water on site for you and your customers. Place a basin under the bottle to catch the waste water.



## POLICY ISSUES:

### PRESSURE AUTHORITIES TO:

- promptly allow all food traders to trade.
- ensure suppliers (e.g. secondary fresh produce markets) and those transporting traders' goods are also able to operate.
- provide unlimited water points so that traders can wash their hands, workplaces and products frequently.
- provide masks, sanitisers and/or bleach as a matter of urgency.
- exempt food traders from any vending fees.
- be flexible about trading layouts so that street and market traders can practise physical distancing.
- identify unused space—fields, parking lots—where food markets can be set up.
- provide security, in coordination with other security services, in trading areas and around spaza shops. This will assist people in keeping the 2-metre distance, and also deal with the risk of looting.

These guidelines were developed by WIEGO in close consultation with experts in public health (Professors Rajen Naidoo and Leslie London) and the informal economy/food systems. They are informed by South African realities and may need to be adjusted based on your local conditions. April 2020.



Women in Informal Employment:  
Globalizing and Organizing



If safety guidelines are followed, informal traders can trade as safely as supermarkets.