

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) website should be used as a key resource for all aspects of COVID-19 (coronavirus). In addition, the document below contains recommendations, considerations and processes for preparing, acting and reacting to the current events.

One of the best ways to minimize the spread of COVID-19 is to minimize unnecessary exposure to other people. In order to balance this with caring for the hearing health needs of your customers, we recommend the following:

### **Increase Cleaning**

- Wash hands between every customer visit.
- Make hand sanitizer, Kleenex and restrooms available to all customers.
- Disinfect the following each morning and after every customer visit: door handles (inside and out), chair rails, front desk, test room chairs, desk and sound booth, repair room and tools.

### **Decrease Contact**

- Limit handshakes.
- Wear gloves and masks for all patient interactions.
- Remove or rearrange chairs in the waiting room to create distance.
- Consider taking your patients directly to the exam room.
- Utilize hand signals in testing instead of patient response buttons.
- Minimize cash and coin money handling as much as possible.
- Minimize or eliminate common shared items or materials such as pamphlets, magazines, pens.
- Minimize or eliminate the sharing of food and drink. If water is served, it is best in individual bottles.

### **Adjust Schedules**

- Stagger appointments to create time between appointments. This minimizes having multiple patients in the waiting room and allows for proper sanitization before each appointment.
  - If during the confirmation call a patient reports they are feeling sick in any way, reschedule the appointment and suggest they contact their healthcare provider. Utilize the screening questions (provided separately) for reference.
  - Review your upcoming appointments and reach out to customers who could be rescheduled to a future date. For example, patients who have new hearing aids, were seen recently and who report no complaints from their hearing aids may be good candidates to reschedule.
  - If a patient needs batteries, consider mailing them instead.
  - If a patient is having trouble with their hearing aid(s), ask if a less at-risk friend or relative can bring the hearing aid(s) in for them to get checked.
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### **Plan for the Possibility of Closing Temporarily**

Prepare a contingency plan. As this is an ever-evolving situation, you should follow local, state and federal guidance. When determining the timeline for a temporary closure, consider the reason for closing.

We recommend temporarily closing a store in the following situations:

- Local, state or federal guidance requiring a location to close.
- Positive COVID-19 test for any staff member.
- Positive COVID-19 test for any customer seen in the past 14 days.
- Known exposure for any staff member or customer, until results are confirmed negative.

### **Staffing Preparation**

Proactively define alternate staffing plans for closures. If a closure is due to staff, consider assigning alternate staff who could cover the location, once the location has been fully sanitized. With reduced coverage, prioritize those patients and customers in most need.

### **Inventory and Supply Preparation**

Consider carrying additional hearing aid inventory in order to minimize patient trips and optimize staff availability.

Actively source for relevant hygienic products such as hand sanitizer, medical grade alcohol wipes, rubber gloves, disposable germicidal pre-moistened cloths.

### **Current COVID-19 Updates**

- World Health Organization (WHO): <https://www.who.int/>
- Center for Disease Control (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/>

### **Small Business Assistance**

Companies impacted by COVID-19 now have access to \$50 billion in federally guaranteed, low-interest loans through the U.S. Small Business Administration.

- Loans for small business operating expenses after a declared disaster
  - Up to \$2m working capital @ 3.75% interest rate
  - Must be a declared / approved disaster location, currently applies to many states and counties
  - See if you qualify for EIDL: <https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/Declarations/Index>
  - General Information: <https://www.sba.gov/disaster-assistance/coronavirus-covid-19>
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