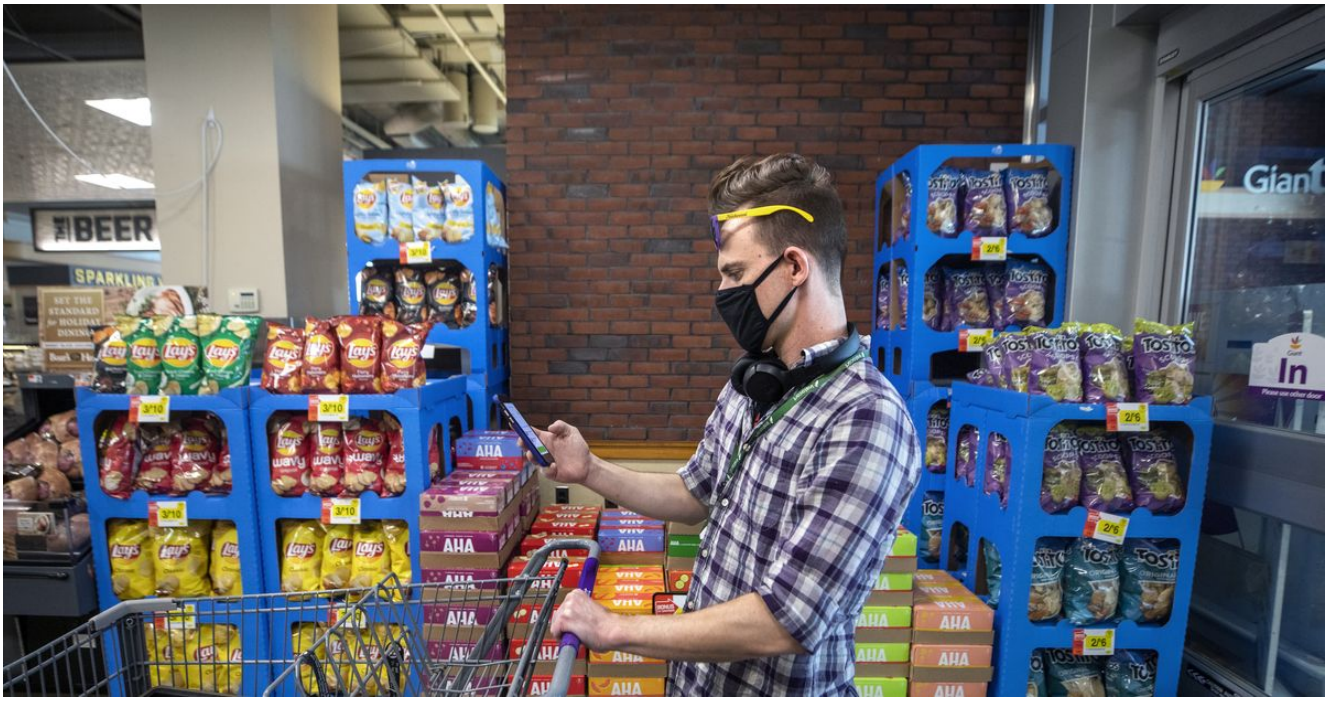
Instacart is hiring even more shoppers and adding ‘wellness checks’ to its shopper app



Grocery delivery platform Instacart says it plans to add 250,000 new workers, is extending the sick pay period for shoppers with COVID-19, and is introducing new safety measures for workers, including an in-app wellness check. Instacart announced exactly a month ago it was adding 300,000 new shoppers to meet the huge demand for grocery delivery during the coronavirus pandemic. It’s part of a massive uptick in hiring for “essential businesses” that remain open despite widespread stay-at-home orders; Walmart said it would hire 150,000 new workers and Amazon said it was adding 100,000 new employees.

Instacart’s new “wellness check” is a questionnaire in its app that asks workers if they have negative symptoms. If workers say they aren’t feeling well, the company says they will be directed to contact their health care provider and stop working until they feel better.

The company previously had announced safety measures that included sourcing its own hand sanitizer and providing “safety kits” to any shopper who ordered one. Instacart said today it was making the safety kits available for order via the Instacart Shopper app, rather than the website shoppers had been using.

But as the company announces another massive expansion to its workforce, safety measures don’t seem to be going smoothly yet. On Saturday, *Wired* reported many shoppers were still waiting to receive the safety kits Instacart promised on April 2nd. According to shoppers *Wired* spoke with, the process to receive the kits was confusing and cumbersome, involving a glitchy website that left shoppers confused about what they would actually receive and when.

The company says it set up the ordering system so it could verify that people who order the kits are active shoppers, and says that shoppers have started receiving their kits over the past week.

Last month, Instacart shoppers, who are largely contract gig workers not eligible for benefits, said they would refuse new orders because they did not think the company had done enough to protect them during the COVID-19 outbreak. The shoppers wanted Instacart to provide protective gear such as hand sanitizer, add a $5-per-order hazard payment, and expand its sick leave policy. Instacart made its own hand sanitizer and announced any shopper could order it directly from the company. But shoppers said they were concerned for their health and that Instacart’s measures weren’t going far enough.

“Instacart has become an essential service for millions of families relying on us to help deliver their groceries and household goods in the wake of COVID-19,” Apoorva Mehta, founder and CEO of Instacart said in a statement emailed to *The Verge* today. “We’re committed to getting back to one-hour and same-day delivery speeds, and in order to do that, we’re

continuing to grow our shopper community to meet the surge in customer demand.”

Instacart promised to offer up to 14 days of paid sick leave for workers diagnosed with or quarantining as a result of COVID-19, and said today it’s extending this benefit “for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis.”

https://www.theverge.com/2020/4/23/21233246/instacart-hiring-safety-shoppers-kits-wellness-check-app