

COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses

This document will provide guidance to protect your employees and customers from COVID-19 in the workplace or place of business. Strategies can be adapted to meet the needs of different environments.

Novel Coronavirus and COVID-19

COVID-19 stands for **Corona Virus Disease – 2019** (year the outbreak began). COVID-19 spreads through the direct contact with the respiratory droplets of someone who is infected with the virus through their cough or sneeze. These droplets can spread up to two metres/six feet. It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

Everyone Should Follow these Protective Measures to Stay Safe

- Keep two metres/six feet distance from others
- Clean your hands often. Use soap and water or an alcohol-based (70%) hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with your elbow or a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- A face mask or covering can be used if you are unable to maintain a two metres/six feet distance from others, such as on transit, in an elevator, when shopping or entering and leaving your apartment building.
- Avoid non-essential trips in the community.

Screen Staff for COVID-19 Symptoms before Work

It is strongly recommend that all staff complete a health screening questionnaire before each work shift. The questions can be completed on a paper based questionnaire; can be asked directly to employees and answers recorded; or can be completed electronically. See [sample screening form](#) that can be used.

Policy for Employee Attendance

Employers should ensure staff do not come to work sick. Have a clear procedure to notify a supervisor if a staff is sick. Consider the following:

- Teleworking options if available.
- Stagger shifts or offer flexible work hours and schedules.
- If employees become sick with COVID-19 symptoms while at work, they should go home right away and self-isolate. Employee can call Telehealth, their health care provider or an [Assessment Centre](#) to see if they need testing.

- Establish criteria for returning to work.
- Maintain flexible policies so employees can stay home to care for a sick family member, or if they must self-isolate because they were in close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- Be flexible about needing a doctor's note.

Clean Hands Often

Handwashing or using an alcohol-based (70%) hand sanitizer is very important to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Washing with soap and water is preferred if hands are visibly dirty. Clean hands thoroughly, lather and rub for at least 15 seconds. Ensure adequate supplies are maintained. If gloves are being used, after removing gloves, place in garbage and wash hands.

Practise Physical Distancing

Employees should keep two metres/six feet from other staff and customers as much as possible. Discourage employees from congregating. Ensure staff maintain physical distancing while in lunch room and meeting rooms.

Cloth and Non-Medical Masks

Non-medical / cloth masks are strongly recommended for employees when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Train staff on the [proper use](#) of masks and [how to safely put on and take off a mask](#).

Engineering Controls

Consider installing Plexiglas or other barriers if there will be close contact between your staff and customers. Use tap features at checkout instead of cash.

Cleaning and Disinfectants

Ensure frequent [cleaning and disinfecting](#) of high-touch surfaces and common areas such door handles, counters, cabinet doors, elevator buttons, light switches, faucets, toilet handles, hand rails, touch screen surfaces and keypads. Common areas should have soap, hand sanitizer and/or disinfectant wipes. If wipes are not available, general disinfectants can be used.

Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN) that confirms it is [approved for use in Canada](#). Follow manufacturer's instructions and check the expiry date of products.

Establish Policies

Make plans to operate with different levels of staff absenteeism due to illness, ill-dependants, or for child care during school closures. Businesses and other employers should prepare to institute flexible workplace and leave policies. Review and decide what services are essential during this pandemic. Plan business functions, jobs, roles and critical elements within your business that have been identified to be essential or critical.

Establish a communication process to update employees and business partners on changes to your business during COVID-19. Provide communications with anticipation there may be employee fear, anxiety, rumors, and misinformation.

Travel

At this time, the Government of Canada recommends all Canadians avoid all non-essential travel. Check the Government of Canada's [travel advisories](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations. Travellers entering Canada will be required to [self-isolate](#) for 14 days after return from travel outside of Canada. Healthy individuals that cross the border and are deemed essential workers are exempt from self-isolation but must self-monitor for symptoms.

If there is a Case of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Person(s) with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 are reported by health care providers and laboratories to public health. If someone at the workplace got COVID-19, public health will conduct an investigation and assess risks to staff that may have occurred in the workplace. Public Health will advise staff/workplace of any additional measures needed to reduce the risk of transmission. This may include instructions for staff to self-isolate or self-monitor for [COVID-19 symptoms](#), and/or increase cleaning and disinfecting. Unless advised by Toronto Public Health through the above assessment, there are no restrictions or special measures required for contacts of suspected cases of COVID-19 in the setting.

Keeping Customers Safe

Reduce overcrowding. Increase your online or phone services. Plan for curb side delivery. Hand sanitizer if available for customers should be at entry and exit.

Cloth Masks & Face Coverings for Customers

Cloth masks and face covers are also strongly recommended to customers when physical distancing is difficult to maintain. Not all customers will be able to tolerate a mask and should not be denied service. Alternative ways to provide service to these individuals should be considered (online ordering/delivery).

COVID-19 Signs to Screen Customers

To protect everyone, we strongly recommend placing [posters](#) at the entrance to ensure customers do not enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms. If you provide one-on-one service, consider screening customers prior to arrival over the phone. People with symptoms of COVID-19 should go home right away so they do not spread the virus to staff and other customers.

Manage Entrance, Flow & Capacity to Maintain Physical Distancing Throughout

- Find ways to limit entrances to allow ease of movement and keep two metres/six feet distance from others.
- Limited the number of customers to allow for ease of movement while staying six feet apart.
- Post physical distancing signs at all entrances and by cashier or service counters.
- Maintain line management - use public announcement systems or have staff remind everyone to stay 6 feet apart, for everyone's safety.
- Place tape or circles on the floor so the customers know where to stand as they wait in line or when interacting with staff.
- Remove non-essential items from the counter to reduce disinfecting items.
- Wipe down high touch surfaces frequently with a disinfectant.
- For mail, product or curb-side delivery, follow contact less delivery.

More Information

Information changes frequently. Visit our website at toronto.ca/COVID19 for updated information or call us at 416-338-7600.

Download and Print Posters for your Space

[Physical Distancing](#)

[Physical Distancing in Elevators](#)

[Protect yourself](#)

[COVID-19 - Cover Your Cough](#)

[How to safely put on and take off a mask](#)

[Posters and Staff Screening Questionnaires](#)

Other Materials

[Strategies for Community Partners to Practice Physical Distancing and Reduce the Spread of COVID-19](#)

[Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance: Essential Workplaces](#)

[Province of Ontario Guidance to Prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety COVID-19 Tip Sheets](#)

[Advice for essential retailers during COVID-19 pandemic](#)

[Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)