

COVID-19 Guidance for Employers, Workplaces and Businesses

This document provides guidance for employers to protect employees and customers from COVID-19 in a non-health care workplace or place of business. Strategies can be adapted to meet the needs of different environments.

More information about COVID-19 can be found in the Toronto Public Health [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#).

Develop a plan to protect employees

- Make plans to minimize the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Check the other resources listed at the bottom of this document for information specific to your sector (e.g. food processing, construction, retail, manufacturing).
- Plans should address the following topics:
 - Attendance policies
 - Screening employees
 - Physical distancing measures
 - Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
 - Environmental cleaning and disinfection
 - Use of personal preventive equipment (PPE)
 - Managing cases of COVID-19 in the workplace
- Discuss and share your plan with everyone at work, including employees, supervisors, health and safety representatives, unions, contractors, and suppliers.
- Maintain up-to-date information for all employees, including contact information, shift assignments, attendance records, and delivery logs to assist Toronto Public Health with contact tracing if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in your workplace.
 - Daily logs of customers with their contact information (e.g. appointment or reservation lists and registration logs) will also assist with public health contact tracing.

Train employees

- All employees should be aware of the signs and symptoms associated with COVID-19. Visit our webpage to learn about the [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Train employees to ensure they are aware of, and can implement plans, to minimize the risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- Train employees on the proper use of personal protective equipment.
- Share information in all languages spoken by your employees, if possible.

Have flexible policies for employee attendance and hours

- Remind employees about the importance of reporting illness to their supervisor.
- Do not allow employees who are sick to come to work. If an employee becomes sick with COVID-19 symptoms while at work, they should go home right away and self-isolate.
- Instruct employees to call Telehealth, their health care provider, and/or a visit an [Assessment Centre](#) for testing if they are sick.

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- Maintain flexible policies so employees can stay home if they are sick, if they must care for a sick family member, or if they must self-isolate because they were in close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- Establish criteria for returning to work. In general, employees are able to return to work 14 days after their symptoms start if they had COVID-19. There are no tests of clearance that are required to return to work. Be flexible about needing a doctor's note.
- Non-essential work travel should be avoided. Travellers entering Canada will be required to [self-isolate](#) for 14 days after return from travel anywhere outside of Canada. Healthy individuals that cross the border and are deemed essential employees are exempt from self-isolation but must [self-monitor](#) for symptoms.
- Make plans to operate with different levels of employee absenteeism due to illness, ill-dependants, or for child care during school closures.
- Plan business functions, jobs, roles and critical elements within your business that have been identified to be essential or critical when restrictions are in place or if staffing levels are reduced.

Conduct screening prior to entering the workplace

- Employees should complete a [health screening questionnaire](#) before each work shift.
- The questions can be completed on a paper-based questionnaire, asked directly to employees and answers recorded, or completed electronically.
- Individuals who answer YES to any of the questions must not be permitted to enter the workplace. Refer these individuals to our website to learn about [assessment centres and testing](#).
- Consider screening customers and other visitors prior to entry to a workplace. If this is not feasible, display [posters](#) at entrances telling people that they must not enter if they have symptoms.

Maintain physical distancing

- Employees should keep two metres/six feet from other employees and customers as much as possible.
- Ensure employees maintain physical distancing while in the lunch room, change rooms, meeting rooms, and other common areas.
- Consider scheduling and administrative changes to reduce the number of employees present at the same time, such as:
 - Teleworking options, if available
 - Staggering work shifts and breaks
 - Flexible work hours and schedules
 - Virtual meetings
- If employees are carpooling, encourage them to limit the number of passengers in their car, ensure they do not drive/ride if they are sick, and follow [guidance for ride-share vehicles](#).
- Manage entrance, flow and capacity of employees and customers:
 - Limit the number of people entering the building or in common areas (e.g. lunch rooms, change rooms, meeting rooms) at one time.
 - Use visual markers/cues spaced two metres/six feet apart (e.g. tape on the floor, pylons, signs) if there may be close contact between employees (e.g. on a production line) or between employees and customers (e.g. check-out lines)
 - Alternatively, a protective barrier (e.g. plexiglass) may be installed.

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- Remove surplus furniture and supplies from rooms and walkways to allow ease of movement while maintaining physical distancing.
- Provide services by phone whenever possible.
- Use outdoor space whenever possible.
- Assign workstations to a single user if possible, or limit the number of users.
- Maintain line management. Use public announcement systems or have employees remind everyone to stay two metres/six feet apart.
- Use tap features at checkout instead of cash.
- For mail, product or curbside delivery, follow contactless delivery.
- Post [Physical Distancing](#) signs at all entrances, in employees rooms, in [elevators](#), and in public areas (e.g. cashiers, service counters).

Support and encourage proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

- Educate employees on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:
 - [Clean hands](#) thoroughly with liquid soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds frequently throughout the day.
 - Hand sanitizers (70-90% alcohol concentration) can be used provided hands are not visibly soiled.
 - Avoid touching your face, nose and mouth 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.
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer in dispensers for employees and customers to use.
- Employers should monitor hand hygiene supplies to ensure adequate amounts of liquid soap, paper towel, hand sanitizer, tissues, and waste receptacles lined with plastic bags.
- Post [Wash your Hands](#), [Cover your Cough](#), and [Hand Sanitizing](#) signage in highly visible areas throughout the workplace, and in public and employee bathrooms.

Implement enhanced environmental cleaning and disinfection practices

- Ensure [cleaning and disinfection](#) of high-touch surfaces at least twice a day and more frequently as needed. High-touch surfaces include items such as door handles, counters, cabinet doors, elevator buttons, light switches, faucets, toilet handles, hand rails, touch screen surfaces, and keypads.
- Equipment and tools that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected regularly, including between users (e.g. cashier's stations, machinery).
- Refer to [Health Canada's list of hard surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) for information on disinfectants:
 - Disinfectants must have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
 - Check the expiry dates of products and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Educate employees on how to use cleaning agents and disinfectants:
 - Required disinfectant contact times (i.e. amount of time that the product will need to remain wet on a surface to achieve disinfection).
 - Safety precautions and required personal protective equipment.
 - Directions for where and how to securely store cleaning and disinfectant supplies.
- It is strongly recommended to assign or designate employees to conduct environmental cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day.

Use personal protective equipment

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) can be used to prevent the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Personal protective equipment is not a substitute for the other required preventive measures such as proper hand hygiene and physical distancing.
- In non-health care settings, non-medical or cloth masks are strongly recommended for employees when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Wearing a non-medical mask will protect others from the wearer's respiratory droplets and germs.
- Employees should receive clear instructions on the proper use of [masks](#), including when and how to safely [put on and take off a mask](#).
- Consider providing non-medical or cloth masks to customers if they are receiving a service where physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Employees should use gloves if it is anticipated that hands will come into contact with bodily fluids, broken skin, mucous membranes, contaminated equipment or environmental surfaces.
- Proper hand hygiene should be practiced before and after removing masks and gloves, if used.

If there is a case of COVID-19 in the workplace

- The role of Toronto Public Health (TPH) is to:
 - Receive reports of confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 from health care providers, laboratories, and institutions (e.g. child care centres, hospitals, long-term care homes).
 - Conduct an investigation to determine where the person with COVID-19 may have acquired the infection and whom they may have come into close contact with (contact tracing).
 - If the person with COVID-19 was at the workplace while contagious, TPH will interview the employee, and if necessary, the employer, to determine who the person may have come into contact with while at work.
 - Consent is obtained from the employee before disclosing personal health information to the employer.
 - If the person with COVID-19 did not work while contagious, it may not be necessary for TPH to contact the employer.
 - Manage multiple cases occurring at a workplace (outbreak), including determining whether there is ongoing transmission at the workplace.
 - Advise the employer of additional preventive measures needed to reduce the risk of infection to others in the workplace (e.g. instructions for workplace contacts to self-isolate or self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms, referral of other employees for testing, increase cleaning and disinfection).
 - Determine when self-isolation of the case and their close contacts is no longer required. Tests for clearance to return to work are not necessary.
 - Work with the employer to communicate with employees. A public notification may be required if TPH does not have the information needed to identify and reach customers who may have been exposed to a person with confirmed COVID-19 infection.
- Role of employers:
 - Contact TPH at 416-338-7600 for further guidance if you have been notified that an employee has tested positive and/or you have concerns that employees may have been exposed to a person with COVID-19 in the workplace.

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- Clean and disinfect any surfaces that may have been touched by the ill employee as soon as possible.
- Provide TPH with contact information of exposed employees and customers to assist with contact tracing.
- Follow public health guidance on additional preventive measures.
- Support employees who are required to be absent from work due to illness or being a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Maintain confidentiality of employees' personal health information.
- Report to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) if you have been advised that one of your employees has tested positive due to exposure at the workplace.
- Communicate with employees and business partners early and often to ensure accurate information is being shared.

More Information

Please visit our website at toronto.ca/COVID19 for updated information or call us at 416-338-7600.

Other Resources

Toronto Public Health: [COVID-19: Community & Workplace Settings](#) (includes sector-specific guidance)

Province of Ontario: [Develop Your COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan](#)

Province of Ontario: [Guidance to Prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) (includes sector-specific guidance)

Province of Ontario: [COVID-19 Support for Businesses](#)

Government of Canada: [COVID-19: Your Rights and Responsibilities as an Employee](#)

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

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