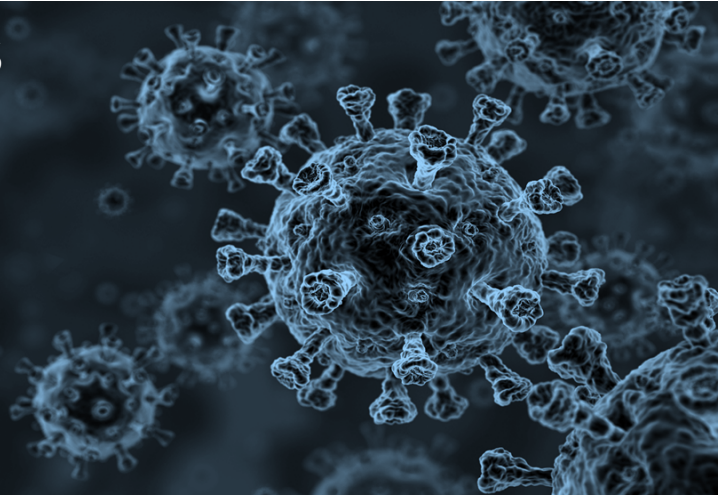




COVID-19: PRECAUTIONS WHEN WORKING IN ADMINISTRATION IN HEALTHCARE



OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

You should also regularly check for requirements applicable to your region, such as:

- the provincial COVID-19 Response Framework
- municipal bylaws
- orders from your local public health unit

To help prevent outbreaks, you are encouraged to develop a COVID-19 workplace safety plan. All businesses operating in a region in lockdown are required to have one under provincial regulation.

LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS

Coronaviruses are spread primarily from person-to-person through close contact, including at work. Here are some [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:



- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with 60-90% alcohol content).
- You must use a face covering (non-medical mask, such as a cloth mask) in public indoor spaces (unless [exempted](#)) Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Wash your hands and clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you are ill notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions you receive.

BEST PRACTICES TO STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE

RECOGNIZE AND ASSESS

According to Health Canada, symptoms can appear in as little as a few days or as long as 14 days after being exposed to someone with the disease. [COVID-19](#) can cause a range of symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath.

For some people, the symptoms are like having a cold; for others they are quite severe or even life threatening.. It is important to check with your healthcare provider, Telehealth, or local Public Health Unit and follow instructions about [staying home](#) or away from public spaces to prevent the spread of the virus. The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then the face - mouth, nose, or eyes.

Close contact with a potentially infected person or touching potentially contaminated items (such as railings, door handles, keyboards, desks, hard surfaces, etc.) are likely to pose the greatest exposure risks. Also, close contact with other people increases the risk of exposure to someone who may be infected.

The first step to controlling risks in a workplace is to identify the risks. This applies to all workplace hazards, not just COVID-19. Identifying and controlling workplace hazards is required of all employers in Ontario under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. The key risk factors for COVID-19 transmission include:

- prolonged exposure - spending more time with potentially infected people
- close proximity - working close to others
- crowded places - having more people in a space
- closed spaces - indoor spaces with less fresh air exchange (working indoors is riskier than working outdoors)



- forceful exhalation - activities that cause people to breathe more deeply, such as exercise, speaking loudly and singing

It is possible for COVID-19 to be spread by people who do not have any symptoms. This makes effective control measures very important. We must act as if everyone is infected when setting up controls. The risk of severe health outcomes is not the same for all workers. The risk increases with age and is higher for people with certain medical conditions.

CONTROL

1. Follow the requirements set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act as well as policies and procedures, including infectious disease preparedness and response plans established by your employer

All workplace parties have roles and responsibilities to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#) and its regulations, and the applicable Directives coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health can be found [here](#).

Workers should raise any concerns to their:

- Supervisor
- Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative
- Union if applicable

Under [Subsection 28\(1\)](#) of the OHSA, workers have a duty to:

- Work in compliance with the provisions of the Act and regulations
- Use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing that the worker's employer requires to be used to worn
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor any contravention of the Act or Regulations or the existence of any hazard of which he or she knows.

Under the OHSA, employers have the duty to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers from hazards in the workplace. Workers have [right to refuse unsafe work](#). If health and safety concerns are not resolved internally, a worker can file a complaint with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development's Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008. An inspector will follow-up to determine if the employer is complying with the OHSA. Failure of the employer to comply with the OHSA and its regulations could result in enforcement action such as an order to comply, which may include a [stop-work order](#), upon inspection by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Follow your workplace safety plan and any infectious disease preparedness and response plans established by the employer should be followed. The plan addresses levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks. This includes how the workplace will [operate](#) during the COVID-19 outbreak



including but not limited to health and safety considerations such as sanitization of workplaces, how workers and employers [report illnesses](#), how to ensure physical distancing, and how work will be scheduled.

2. Maintain [physical distancing](#). Physical distancing generally means maintaining a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet) or more between persons. By maintaining physical distancing, you are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus as the virus can be spread before symptoms appear (pre-symptomatic) and when the person may have contracted the virus but are minimal or no symptoms (asymptomatic).
 - Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) that protects your eyes, nose and mouth (surgical/procedure mask and goggles or face shield) if:
 - you are required to come within 2 metres of another person.,
 - if you are not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person.
 - Workers must use personal protective equipment (PPE) as required by their employer. Workers should be trained/employers must train workers on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.
 - Limiting the total number of people at the workplace and where they are assigned to work
 - Consider implementing a system for virtual and/or telephone consultations when and where possible
 - Non-essential face-to-face appointments should be postponed or converted to virtual appointments
 - Have staff work from home whenever possible (i.e. administrative staff)
 - Staggered start times, meal, and break times
 - Restricting visitors and limiting workplace entry to only essential personnel
 - Suspending all in-person group activities and gatherings
 - Alter the workplace layout of the floor by moving furniture or using visual cues such as tape on the floor to enhance physical distancing
 - Lunchrooms and break rooms must be arranged to follow physical distancing practices and should be well-ventilated. Consider staggered lunch and break times to reduce the number of employees gathering.
3. Follow specific guidance for health and safety and infection prevention and control practices and measures and procedures established by the employer.
 - Refer to the Ontario [Ministry of Health](#), [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Canada](#) for COVID-19 Guidance
 - Establish an [active](#) and passive screening system to check for symptoms, travel history and contact with persons who may have COVID-19. Screening should ideally be done before a person presents to the office by telephone or other virtual mean
 - Consider increasing the spatial separation between desks and workstations as well as individuals. Space yourself at least 2 metres apart from others and limit the total number of people inside rooms, elevators and offices at one time.
 - Employees who are within 2 metres of of another person shall have access to appropriate PPE. Employees must be appropriately trained to safely [don and doff all PPE](#).



- Don't share telephones, keyboards, desks and workstations, if possible
 - Given that COVID-19 can survive on surfaces and objects, work and/or services that are transactional in nature may represent a higher risk of exposure. Enhance/increase [environmental cleaning procedures](#) and protocols to ensure high-contact surfaces are sanitized such as chairs, counters, desks, door handles and reception areas with cleaning products registered in Canada with Drug Identification Number (DIN) or WHMIS label at least twice daily and when visibly dirty. Allow adequate contact time according to the manufacturer's instructions. Practice good [hand hygiene](#) frequently, particularly between every interaction with members of the public.
4. Return to Work after travel or illness. Stay home if you are feeling ill. Comply with screening protocols at your workplace and actively [monitor yourself](#) for any symptoms. If you detect symptoms, you should immediately distance yourself from others and go home. If possible, avoiding using public transit. Ensure you notify your supervisor so that they are aware of the situation and can also notify others who may have been exposed.

Where employees have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days and are seeking to return to work, it is important to balance the protection of the health system and the continued operation of these settings. Workers who have [travelled outside of Canada](#) within the last 14 days should self-isolate for a period of 14 days starting from their arrival in Ontario. Workers should not attend work if they are sick. If returning to work after illness, workers should consult their [local public health unit](#) and their manager/occupational health and safety department to plan their safe return to work.

5. Demonstrate the following precautionary measures while working:
- Do not report to work if you are exhibiting any of the [symptoms](#) or are under [self-isolation](#) or quarantine
 - Limit the amount of face-to-face contact during work activities and [practice physical distancing](#) whenever possible.
 - Use technology for communication (text messaging and mobile phones rather than in-person conversations)
 - Avoid sharing equipment/supplies (i.e. tablets, and electronic devices) where possible. Disinfect regularly if sharing cannot be avoided
 - Limit any casual interactions that normally occur at work
 - Change out of work clothing at the end of each shift and wash them. Do not store your street clothes and work clothing in the same space unless both are clean
 - Consider discussing any underlying medical conditions that might place you at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 with your Human Resources Department

Additionally, the COVID-19 outbreak is a unique and unprecedented scenario for many workers. Ensure you are taking care of both your mental health and psychological well-being, as well as your physical health, during this time. Find out [helpful tips and coping strategies](#).

6. Practice stringent hand hygiene practices. Health Canada recommends following basic hygiene practices:
- Wash hands frequently



- Thoroughly [wash hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) containing 60-90% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Practice respiratory etiquette and sneeze or cough into your sleeve or a tissue and discard it
- Use a clean tissue or your knuckle/elbow to touch light switches, doors, buttons, etc.

EVALUATE

Ask and evaluate:

- Were the proper hygiene facilities (soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) available to you?
- Were you able to practice physical distancing?
- Are you disinfecting (i.e. disposable wipes) frequently touched surfaces routinely?
- Did you have the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that your employer requires you to use or wear to protect you while you do your job?
- Have you been provided training on the proper use of PPE?
- Do you know what to do if you have symptoms of COVID-19?

For Ontario residents, anyone who suspects that they have contracted COVID-19 should call Telehealth Ontario (NOT 911) instead of going to the hospital or a family doctor.

Direct toll-free phone numbers for Ontario residents are:

1-866-797-0000 or TTY: 1-866-797-0007

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL:

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>

TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/taking-care-mental-health.html>

TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)



- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY-ISSUED RESOURCES ABOUT COVID-19

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The [World Health Organization](#) is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

It also provides the most up-to-date information on:

- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

PUBLIC SERVICES HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Access resources and information about COVID-19 at <https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>



Safe Environments
Healthy Workers

www.pshsa.ca

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.