



Introduction

COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets and aerosols, contaminated surfaces, and during close or direct contact with people who are sick. Multiple hazard control measures (physical distancing, wearing face masks, frequent hand hygiene, good respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfection) should be used in a **layered approach** to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In all cases, guidance from local [public health authorities](#) and your [jurisdictional Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) regulator](#) must be followed.

Physical distancing is one control measure that can reduce the risk of spreading the virus, by changing how, when, and where people interact. When implementing physical distancing measures, the goal is to keep the **greatest distance possible** between people (**at least 2 metres in all directions**), while keeping all interactions as **few** and **brief** as possible. This tip sheet provides recommendations that can be used in a variety of workplaces. Since every workplace is unique, apply the best measures for your situation.

Change where the work is done

- Workers whose jobs can be performed remotely should work from home, e.g., office and support staff not directly involved in on-site activities.
- Provide [accommodation](#) to workers at [higher risk](#) of severe disease or outcomes from contracting COVID-19 due to existing medical conditions.
- Use remote communication technologies such as video/teleconferencing for meetings and training.
- Hold traditionally indoor activities outdoors, weather permitting.
- Plan for periods of time when the entire workplace or specific services and facilities may need to close due to jurisdictional lockdowns, or because you've assessed that the risk of spread is high in that situation or setting.

Modify buildings, furniture, and equipment

- Consider modifying indoor spaces to create more room where needed (e.g., remove walls, fold away wall partitions, repurpose less used spaces).
- Rearrange, remove, or block-off workstations, furniture, sinks, lockers, and equipment.
- In shared spaces for eating where people must remove their masks, make sure the space is well [ventilated](#), and that all tables and seats are spaced as far apart as possible. Remove extra seating to discourage overcrowding. Limit the maximum number of seats per table. If room is available expand the number of indoor and outdoor eating areas.
- Position seating and workstations so users are not directly facing each other.
- Install [physical barriers](#) such as plexiglass where distancing is difficult to maintain (e.g., at sales counters, along assembly lines, or between seating and equipment that cannot be moved).
- Prevent people from entering spaces that they do not perform work in or need access to. Post signage and secure doors and gates if needed.
- Equip all workstations with everything needed for a task or shift, minimizing the need to interact with others when sharing tools or fetching materials.
- Use signs and floor markings to indicate where people should stand and walk to stay at least 2 metres apart in all directions.
- Establish one-way walking routes in corridors and stairways to minimize cross traffic.
- For outdoor work and activities, setup widely spaced areas and seating if safe to do so. Use brightly coloured and weather resistant materials to mark the areas (e.g., pegs, pylons, field marking powder, rope, flagging



tape). Take care to not create tripping hazards.

- If people are sharing congregate housing (e.g., bunkhouses, camps, dorms, etc.) place the beds as far apart as possible. Orient the beds “head to toe” to distance the persons faces. Avoid using bunk beds.

Update or create new workplace policies and procedures

- Implement and enforce a physical distancing policy.
- Update all procedures impacted by new physical distancing requirements.
- Make sure that physical distancing measures are discussed in your organization’s COVID-19 communications and training programs.
- Do not exceed the occupancy and gathering limits set by your jurisdiction.
- Limit the number of persons gathered at one time, indoors and outdoors.
- Post room capacity signs at entrances to shared areas (e.g., kitchens, breakrooms, washrooms, conference rooms, elevators, etc.).
- Job tasks and activities that require workers to be in close contact with others should be modified if possible or suspended.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives.
- Discourage people from gathering during breaks, including in outdoor break areas and weather shelters.
- Limit or reschedule visits by external contractors and suppliers.
- Assign each workplace fleet vehicle to a single user, if possible.
- If group transportation (e.g., bus, van, carpooling etc.) is used, spread the passengers out (e.g., staggered seating, assigned seats, skip rows, etc.), set the ventilation to outside air intake, and open the vehicle windows (weather permitting).
- Discourage use of carpooling, public transit, and rideshare services; however, for workers who must use them, suggest they sit away from others and wear a face mask.
- Plan for how people will maintain physical distance while evacuating or sheltering-in-place in the event of an emergency.
- Plan for how to safely isolate a person who is ill in the workplace if they cannot immediately leave for home or medical care.
- Make sure that sick-leave polices support workers who must stay away from the workplace due to COVID-19 illness or exposure (i.e., isolation and quarantine).
- Prepare for exceptions to distancing guidance (e.g., when providing emergency first aid or rescue), and make sure that other protective measures are available and used, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

Consider using a cohort system

- Cohorts are groups of the same people who are always assigned together (also called bubbles or safe squads), such as a shift of workers or a classroom of students.
- A cohort system can limit the spread between people and help the local public health department with contract tracing if an outbreak does occur.
- Cohorts may be required for some work sectors (e.g., oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, education). Check with your jurisdiction.
- Schedule cohorts to work, attend meetings and training, take breaks and mealtimes, participate in activities, ride on group transportation, and share living accommodations together.
- Make sure that members of different cohorts do not mingle together.
- Use smaller cohorts for people who may require more assistance with following COVID-19 precautions, such as young children or the elderly.
- To help reduce community spread, encourage workers to only work at one job location if possible, and to



minimize in-person interactions with people from outside of their immediate household when not at work.

Adjust worker schedules and assignments

- Set daily staff levels to the fewest people needed to continue business activities.
- If less workers are scheduled or available, make sure that key roles are filled by trained individuals, e.g., supervisors, emergency first aid and spill responders, health and safety representatives, essential operations, etc.
- Stagger shift schedules to reduce crowding at entrances and exits, hallways, breakrooms, and punch-clocks.
- Incorporate extra time into workers' schedules for them to complete their regular tasks safely, while also meeting physical distancing, personal hygiene, and cleaning-disinfection requirements (e.g., without rushing or cutting steps).
- To reduce the potential daily exposure time of each worker, reduce the length of long shifts (e.g., 10+ hours), or rotate them to tasks that are not public-facing.
- Assign workers to assist a single client, household group, or cohort at a time.
- If workers must use public transportation to come to work, consider flexible hours to allow them to avoid peak travel periods.
- Avoid all non-essential business travel.

Change how goods and services are provided to clients

- Offer goods and services online (e.g., online sales, tele-health) so clients do not need to come into the workplace.
- Use alternative ways to deliver goods, such as curbside pickup or mail.
- Manage bookings and cancellations online or over the phone. Discourage walk-ins.
- Offer flexible cancellation and return policies, so sick clients do not feel pressured to come into your workplace.
- Ask clients to not arrive early for appointments, to not gather if waiting, and to leave promptly afterwards.
- Restrict the number of people allowed in for an appointment, e.g., limit access to only the appointment holder, unless assistance or supervision from a companion is required.
- If an in-person appointment can be safely delayed, consider postponing it until pandemic restrictions are lifted.

Change client activities and programs

- Limit the amount of time a client can be in the workplace (e.g., shopping or using facilities).
- Stagger participant pick-up and drop-off times, classes and activity groups, and client appointments.
- Schedule adequate time between activities in indoor places, to air-out the space, perform cleaning and disinfection, and have the previous client or cohort leave before the next one enters.
- Book time slots for use of popular equipment and facilities to reduce the chance of people gathering while they wait.
- Hold group activities with the smallest number of participants possible.
- Consider offering more frequent but smaller groups instead of one large group.
- Choose to run non-contact activities or modify them to be non-contact.
- Have participants face the same direction for as many activities as possible, and specifically avoid activities involving face-to-face positioning.



If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

Disclaimer: As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.