



## Introduction

This tip sheet is intended to help employers and workers understand how screening can be used to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace.

For general COVID-19 prevention practices for both employers and workers, refer to [Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#).

## Control Measures to Help Reduce the Risk of COVID-19 Transmission

The most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission is to follow the hierarchy of controls and [use a layered approach](#). Physical distancing, proper ventilation, good hand hygiene, the wearing of non-medical masks, and active screening are some of the measures that can help prevent the spread.

## Active Screening for COVID-19

Screening is used to identify persons who may be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 and may not be showing any symptoms. It involves asking questions about a person's health and possible exposures but is not meant to be a clinical assessment or to take the place of medical advice. Rather, it is a way to identify people who may spread the virus so that measures can be taken to prevent further transmission.

Active screening may be legally mandated in some jurisdictions and in certain workplaces including schools, daycares, long-term care, and retirement homes. When used effectively, active screening can help prevent transmission and outbreaks.

## The Reasons to Screen for COVID-19

The SARS-CoV-2 virus causes the illness COVID-19. This virus has caused a pandemic because it can spread very easily between individuals, and people do not have immunity to it.

Individuals who are infected with the virus can spread it to others, even before they develop symptoms (known as being pre-symptomatic) and some infected people have no symptoms at all (known as asymptomatic). These people can still spread the virus, even if they may not look or feel sick.

## Symptoms of COVID-19

Symptoms appear within 5 or 6 days but may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus. Symptoms of COVID-19 can vary from person to person. They may also vary according to age group. In severe cases, infection can lead to death.

Symptoms can vary from person to person and within different age groups. Older adults, people of any age with chronic medical conditions, people of any age who are immunocompromised, and those living with obesity are at risk for more severe disease outcomes from COVID-19.

The most common symptoms are:

- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Temperature equal to or over 38°C
- Feeling feverish
- Chills
- Fatigue or weakness

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- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of smell or taste
- Headache
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (abdominal pain, diarrhea, vomiting)
- Feeling very unwell
- Skin changes or rashes (young children)

## Self Assessment for COVID-19

Continue to encourage your workers to assess themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 at least once a day or as often as required by your health and safety risk assessment and plan. Workers who are in close contact with others or who work with people at high risk for more severe disease or outcomes from COVID-19 may need to self assess more often throughout their shift.

Follow self-assessment steps from the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) or your local [public health authority](#).

## Screen Before Entering the Workplace

Some jurisdictions require active screening of employees everyday before they come into work. Active screening steps may involve a self-assessment (e.g., using a web-based tool, having a person complete a questionnaire, or having a designated person ask direct questions). Consider the size of your workforce, the number of worksites, shifts, and activities when choosing your screening methods.

## How to Screen Workers

Screening questions ask your workers if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Additional screening information includes questions about travelling outside of Canada, notification from the local public health unit about possible exposure, or requirement to isolate. Use a checklist or questionnaire provided by your local public health authority.

On-line screening assessments are available in many languages. Access the COVID-19 self-assessment tool [here](#).

## How to Screen Customers

Some jurisdictions also require employers to screen their customers before entering their facility. Customers or clients could be asked about symptoms and exposure risks when they are booking their appointments and again at reception when arriving at the premises. On-line screening assessments for customers are also [available](#).

Customers could be screened by using a checklist or questionnaire such as by asking customers to read the checklist and confirm they do not have any symptoms or risk factors (e.g. recent travel outside of Canada) before entering the store.

## Using a Designated Person(s) to Screen

If a designated person is screening individuals in person, the screener should keep a physical distance of two metres and wear personal protective equipment (PPE) (gloves, masks, facial protection etc.), as appropriate. They should also be trained on how to use the screening tool, what to do if there are concerns about the screening results, and what to do when someone does not pass the screening.

## When Workers and Others Do Not Pass Screening

If you put active screening measures into place, you also need to have a procedure for handling persons who screen as having possible concerns. Anyone who does not pass screening should not enter the facility. They should wear a mask (preferably a medical mask), return home avoiding public transit as much as possible, and contact their health care provider or local public health authority and follow their advice.

Call 911 if anyone experiences severe difficulty breathing (struggling for breath, can only speak in single words),

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severe chest pain (constant tightness or crushing sensation), feeling confused or unsure of where they are, or losing consciousness.

## When to Quarantine

Individuals who have no symptoms of COVID-19 will be required to quarantine after:

- returning from travel outside of Canada for 14 days (unless exempted as an essential worker)
- travelling to a [province or territory](#) requiring a 14 day quarantine
- having close contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19, or
- being told by their public health authority that they may have been exposed

## When to Isolate

Individuals must isolate when:

- diagnosed as having COVID-19 or are waiting for lab results for COVID-19
- experiencing symptoms, even if mild and after contact with someone who has or is suspected as having COVID-19
- experiencing symptoms, even if mild and have been told by public health that you may have been exposed to COVID-19 or
- returning from travel outside of Canada with symptoms of COVID-19

Find your [public health authority](#) to get more information.

## Record Keeping

Establish a procedure for keeping worker screening records. Determine whether documentation will be in paper, electronic, or combination of both. Records may be required as proof that worker screening is occurring.

Information will also be required to support contract tracing. Record the names and contact information of screened individuals who enter the workplace.

Makes sure that privacy is protected and that all personal information is stored securely. Follow guidance from your local public health authority on how long to retain records until they can be destroyed.

## Continue with your Risk Assessments and Evaluation of Controls

Screening does not replace public health and safety requirements. Employers must continue to conduct risk assessments on how COVID-19 can be transmitted in their workplaces and use the hierarchy of controls to provide a layered approach to reducing the risk.

Continue with physical distancing, engineering, ventilation, cleaning, and disinfecting, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and non-medical masks as part of your health and safety plan. Regularly review your plan and work with your health and safety committee or representative to make changes as needed.

**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.