



Introduction

This tip sheet is for persons who are working from home (telework / telecommuting) while their regular place of business is responding to the pandemic. It provides an overview of recommended controls to help reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the at-home workplace.

In all cases, guidance from local [public health authorities](#) must be followed. Also refer to current guidance from the [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#), your [jurisdictional OHS regulator](#), and applicable business associations.

The employer must meet their legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible under the circumstances to protect the health and safety of their workers.

General Guidance

For general COVID-19 prevention practices for both employers and workers refer to:

[CCOHS - Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#)
[CCOHS - COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers](#)
[CCOHS - COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#)

For more information about working from home and setting up an ergonomic home workspace, please visit these links:

[Government of Canada - Working Remotely](#)
[Canadian Psychological Association - Working From Home](#)
[CCOHS - Telework / Telecommuting](#)
[CCOHS - Telework and Home Office Health and Safety Guide](#)
[CCOHS - Working Alone](#)
[CCOHS - Ergonomics](#)
[CCOHS - Office Ergonomics](#)

Responsibilities

- Even though you are working from home, the employer is still responsible for certain aspects of your health and safety while performing work.
- This responsibility may include exposure to hazards such as ergonomic (musculoskeletal), biological, chemical, electrical, slips, trips and falls, emergency response, and psychosocial concerns (isolation, stress, anxiety, and depression).
- When possible, continue to follow all safe work procedures. The employer should communicate any new practices and policies that will affect or assist you while working from home.
- Reach out to your employer and health and safety committee or representative for assistance with performing a risk assessment and setting up a safe home workspace.
- Discuss with your employer if you have any health and safety concerns. If it is unsafe to work, talk to your supervisor, health and safety committee or representative, and/or union.
- **If you become sick or injured while working, notify your supervisor and employer immediately.**
- If the illness may be COVID-19, contact your health care provider and/or local public health authority for instructions.
- Call 911 or emergency services if symptoms are life threatening.
- If the illness or injury is work-related, additional notifications will be required by the employer to the [jurisdictional OHS regulator](#) and [jurisdictional worker compensation board](#).



Setting up a safe home workspace

- Assess your home workspace for risks during the initial setup and at regular intervals while continuing to work from home to prevent hazards and injuries from developing.
- Evaluate all of your work activities and in-person interactions, considering the following:
 - *Risk of exposure to COVID-19.* Risk of transmission is increased with close proximity (less than 2 metres) and in-person interactions (close-range conversations, touching), generation of respiratory droplets (when speaking, coughing, sneezing, singing, shouting, strenuous activities that increase breath rate), crowded or closed spaces with poor ventilation, inadequate personal hygiene practices or facilities, and contaminated surfaces.
 - *Change control.* When implementing new COVID-19 control measures, assess the potential impacts to existing infrastructure, work processes, and the health and safety of yourself and your immediate household (if applicable). Due to structural or technological limitations of your home, it may not be possible to safely perform all of your usual work tasks there. Some tasks, processes, and equipment may need to be modified. Make sure you do not create new hazards. Continue to evaluate how effective the controls are and make changes if needed.
- [Ergonomics](#) might be a challenge in a temporary home workspace.
 - Kitchen tables and chairs may not be ideal for sustained sitting and computer use. Make sure that your workstation seating, surfaces, and equipment are set up using ergonomic guidelines for height and reach distances.
 - Make sure there is enough room to move freely without bumping into objects, and remove clutter that might cause slip-trip-fall injuries.
 - Your employer may provide or allow you to borrow equipment such as an ergonomic chair, footrest, or technology that will help to set up a safer work environment. Household objects can be used creatively to improve the ergonomics of a temporary workstation.
 - If necessary, request a home office ergonomic assessment, which may be available remotely through video.
- Consider using alternative methods to meet with co-workers and clients such as virtual gatherings by video or phone.
- If information security is a concern, consult with your IT department and do not allow other household members to use your workstation.
- Interruptions and noise from other household members may be disruptive. If necessary, isolate the home office from shared living areas for quiet and privacy.
- Noise isolating headphones might also be of use if the household or neighbourhood is noisy.
- Work in a space that provides sufficient lighting, ventilation, and a comfortable temperature.

Work-Life Balance

When working from home, it can be challenging to separate professional and personal time:

- If possible, maintain a regular work schedule with a morning start-up routine and an evening shut-down routine.
- To help with mentally separating professional and personal time, one option is to start the day with a short walk outdoors or wear different clothing during work hours.
- To avoid feeling disconnected, communicate often with your supervisor and co-workers.
- Talk to your supervisor or employer if scheduling or workload accommodations are needed.
- Some workers may need time during the day to care for immediate household members.
- Schedule regular work breaks to stretch and eat.
- Make time for hobbies, self-care, restful sleep, healthy diet, and physical activity.
- Book vacation time as if you were still in the regular workplace.
- The shift from a shared workplace to a home environment, along with disrupted routines and fear of illness, can



add additional stress. Access workplace and public mental health resources for support in coping with the pandemic or a temporary work-from-home situation.

COVID-19 Precautions

It is recommended to use multiple [personal preventive practices](#) in a layered approach to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- physical distancing of at least 2 metres, or the greatest distance possible
- properly wearing a well-constructed, well-fitted non-medical mask
- frequent hand hygiene with hand washing and alcohol-based sanitizer
- respiratory etiquette for sneezing and coughing
- frequent cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces
- good ventilation in indoors spaces and vehicles
- daily screening for [symptoms](#) and potential exposures
- isolation if symptomatic, or quarantine if potentially exposed
- minimizing non-essential in-person interactions
- keeping essential in-person interactions as few and as brief as possible
- respecting gathering limits, curfews, and travel restrictions for your jurisdiction
- staying educated and informed from reliable sources

In addition to personal preventive practices, consider the following:

- If someone in your immediate household works outside of the home, consider setting up a separate area where they can change out of their work clothes and sanitize their hands before entering the main home. Immediately put used work clothes into the laundry.
- Assign one member of the immediate household to perform errands such as grocery shopping, or have supplies delivered.
- Stay informed about outbreaks in your local community and avoid visiting high-risk locations.
- For deliveries, consider using a designated drop-off zone or container. Items can be quarantined for 72 hours or sanitized before being used inside the home. External packaging such as cardboard or plastic can be discarded or recycled outside of the home.
- Keep a tracking log of all excursions for yourself and immediate household members (location, time, and date), should the public health authority need the information for contact tracing. Examples include shopping, medical appointments, eating at restaurants and patios, recreational activities, community events, and social visits.
- If someone from outside of your immediate household must visit, take additional precautions: record their contact information and when they were at your home, have them wear a non-medical mask, provide access to hand-hygiene (soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer), limit their access inside the home, open windows and doors to refresh the air, and clean and disinfect the areas and surfaces they touched.

If you develop symptoms, or have potentially been exposed to COVID-19:

- Contact your health care provider and/or local public health authority.
- Call 911 or emergency services if symptoms are life threatening.
- Immediately inform your employer.
- Wear a medical (surgical) mask. If unavailable, properly wear a well-constructed, well-fitted non-medical mask.
- Avoid non-essential interactions. Keep essential in-person interactions few, brief, and at the greatest distance possible.
- Stay home. Do not travel.
- If you share the home with immediate household members, consider isolating in a separate area of the home with your own bathroom, or at a hotel.
- Arrange for food, medicine, and other essential items to be delivered, with appropriate precautions for delivery

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and pick up of items.

- If you must leave the home for a medical appointment or emergency, avoid using public transit, taxi, or rideshare.

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.