

Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19

This tip sheet will help employers and administrators develop policies and procedures to protect workers and others from COVID-19. Guidance for workers is also included. This information should also be reviewed with an [industry-specific tip sheet](#), where available.

In all situations, follow current guidance from local public health and government authorities about protective measures. Be aware that these measures may change as the pandemic continues.

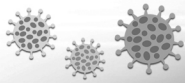
As a worker

- Stay informed, be prepared and follow public health advice.
 - Use trusted information sources, such as Public Health Agency of Canada: www.canada.ca/coronavirus and your local public health authority.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If you feel sick, suspect you may have been exposed, or receive a positive COVID-19 test result:
 - Stay at home and away from others.
 - Contact your health care provider or local public health authority and follow their advice.
- If you become sick while at work:
 - Immediately wear a mask (preferably a medical mask), if not already doing so.
 - Isolate yourself from others in a designated space.
 - Tell your supervisor that you are going home.
 - Avoid using public transit or rideshare if possible.
 - Contact your health care provider or local public health authority and follow their advice.
- Use multiple layers of protective measures to help reduce the risk of transmission, such as physical distancing, barriers, and wearing a mask.
- Limit the time you spend outside of your home in the community and avoid crowds as much as possible. This is especially important if you are in one of these groups at risk for more severe disease or outcomes from COVID-19:
 - Older adults
 - People with chronic medical conditions
 - People who are immunocompromised
 - People who are living with obesity



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- **Avoid higher-risk settings, or take additional measures and keep interactions with others brief when in:**
 - closed spaces
 - crowded places
 - poorly ventilated spaces
 - close-contact settings and close-range conversations
 - settings with activities likely to have singing, shouting, or heavy breathing (e.g., exercise)
- **Maintain a physical distance of at least 2 meters from people outside of your immediate household.**
- **Keep the number of people you have contact with as small as possible.**
- **Practice good hand hygiene:**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm or a tissue and dispose of tissue immediately.
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched or shared surfaces and objects often.**
- **Wear a non-medical mask when:**
 - You are in public and you might come into close contact with others.
 - You are in any indoor space with people from outside your immediate household.
 - You have a high risk of exposure due to your work or living situation.
 - Advised by your local public health authority.
 - Required by your employer.
 - You are at risk for more severe disease or outcomes from COVID-19.
- **Exercise your worker's rights to:**
 - Know about health and safety matters including the potential exposure to COVID-19, and to be provided with information, instructions, education, training, and supervision.
 - Participate in decisions that could affect your health and safety. You can participate on the health and safety committee, report concerns, and provide input.



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- Refuse unsafe work that could affect your health and safety and that of others. This right is typically exercised only after other steps have not resolved the situation. Follow the work refusal process that has been established for your jurisdiction.
- Meet your worker's obligations to:
 - Attend training and follow your employer's safe work procedures (e.g., how to protect yourself and your coworkers from COVID-19, and how to work safely with hazardous products).
 - Immediately report any health and safety concerns to your employer, supervisor, health and safety committee or representative, or union if you have one.
 - For further information on how to protect yourself, see: [COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#).

As an employer

- Actively encourage sick workers to stay at home, even when symptoms are mild, or if workers suspect they may have been exposed.
- Screen workers and visitors as they enter the workplace (questionnaire can be obtained from your public health agency).
- To support contact tracing efforts, record the names and contact information of all workers, customers, and other persons who enter the workplace, as required by your local public health authority. Make sure that privacy is protected, and that the information is stored securely. Contact information must be destroyed in a timely manner according to local privacy requirements.
- Encourage health practices and prevention measures:
 - Promote physical distancing of 2 meters.
 - Install physical barriers in all areas where people interact closely (e.g., plexiglass at reception or between assembly line workers).
 - Limit the number of people that can access the workplace at any given time.
 - Ensure appropriate ventilation in all work areas. Choose outdoor gatherings, when possible.
 - Provide additional, well-stocked hand hygiene stations that are easy to access by everyone including those with disabilities.
 - Encourage workers to clean and disinfect their personal work spaces often and provide them with the supplies to do so.
 - Have written procedures about the use of the facility and equipment, and on cleaning, disinfecting, physical distancing, personal hygiene, non-medical masks, and other requirements.



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- Provide accommodations, where possible, for people who are at high risk for more severe disease or outcomes or are at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 because of their work or living situation.
- Post easy to understand, language-appropriate signs and pictures to help people follow procedures.
- Reduce noise levels as much as possible so people do not need to yell or shout.
- Meet your legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible under the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your workers:
 - Follow both public health and occupational health and safety guidelines that apply to your services and activities from federal, provincial and municipal governments.
 - Perform a [hazard identification and risk assessment](#) of your facilities and services to determine where and how to apply protection measures.
 - Do not create new hazards when implementing control measures (e.g., propping fire doors open).
 - Collaborate with local municipalities or business associations for solutions.
 - Involve your health and safety committee or representative when assessing workplace risks and determining measures to lower risks, including when there is a requirement for personal protective equipment (PPE) and training.
 - Have a policy to protect workers from violence and harassment. Consider providing additional training on dealing with aggressive individuals. New protection measures or limited/modified services are likely to increase the chance of violent interactions.
 - Develop a [COVID-19 emergency response plan](#). Educate and train workers on hazards and the safe use of hazardous products. Ensure all products are properly labelled.

Communication

- Notify workers and customers and clients in advance if there are changes to policies or practices, including reduced hours or restricted access (e.g. washrooms, lockers, etc.).
- Share information online, through advertisements, with notices at the front doors and information boards, via email, and verbally by workers.
- Post signs for workers and others not to enter the facility if they feel sick, suspect they may have been exposed or have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days.
- Post signs throughout the workplace to encourage physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting of equipment, good hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette.
- Make sure that all communications including internal posters and signs are suitable for people's age, ability, reading level, and language preferences.
- Share your COVID-19 safety requirements with external service providers before they visit, and work with them to meet their safety requirements.
- Help workers and customers understand why protective measures are necessary, and that their experience might be different to what they are used to. Remind everyone to be considerate of workers and customers.



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Emergency Planning

- Develop an emergency response plan for events related to COVID-19 (i.e., someone becomes ill in the workplace). Set up procedures and policies in the event a case or outbreak is detected in your workplace, including notification of your local public health authority.
- In the event of an emergency (e.g., fire, chemical spill, inclement weather, shelter-in-place), follow established emergency response procedures and plan how to respond as safely as possible with COVID-19 measures in place. Update existing procedures as needed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- PPE is equipment worn by a worker to minimize exposure to specific hazards. PPE does not reduce the hazard itself nor does it guarantee permanent or total protection. In general, PPE must meet regulated testing and certification standards.
- Non-medical masks are useful in reducing the spread of COVID-19 but are not considered to be PPE.
- Continue to use PPE for existing safety hazards and emergencies, as directed by applicable laws and your employer. For example, you may need PPE when using cleaning and disinfecting chemicals in your home workspace.
- Use PPE for COVID-19 if it is required or recommended by your local public health authorities.
- If workers are required to wear PPE, they must be trained on how to wear, remove, work with, and care for the equipment, and to understand its limitations.
- Clean and disinfect any shared PPE before you wear it.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing PPE.
- Provide uniforms that are laundered by a service or advise workers to change and wash their uniform after work.

Non-Medical Masks

- Follow the non-medical mask recommendations from your public health agency or other authority. Note that people may choose to wear masks regardless of a formal requirement.
- Non-medical masks help to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by blocking respiratory droplets, but they are not certified PPE.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends wearing a three-layer non-medical mask; such as a layer of filter material sandwiched between two layers of tightly woven fabric.
- A mask should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove it without assistance (e.g., due to their age or ability).
- Wear the mask correctly, making sure the nose and mouth are covered.
- Do not touch the mask while wearing it.
- Be aware that non-medical masks have limitations, and improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection.
- Change your mask if it becomes wet or soiled. You may wish to bring a second mask in a clean paper bag, envelope, or container that does not trap moisture.
- Store reusable soiled masks in a separate bag or container. Wash them before re-use.
- Do not touch the outside of the mask while removing it and wash your hands afterwards.
- Consider using a transparent mask for persons that may require that visibility.
- Consider using a plastic face shield to protect the eyes and mask from debris or liquid splashes.
- Do not allow the mask to be a hazard to other activities, such as getting caught on moving machinery or equipment.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Develop a cleaning and disinfection program, with schedules and checklists for each work area.
- Clean and disinfect household and home workspace surfaces regularly, especially if visitors or contractors have been in your home.



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- Focus on surfaces in the interior and exterior of your workplace that are frequently touched by workers and other persons in the workplace. Examples include door handles, counters, chairs, machinery knobs and buttons, PIN payment pads, touchscreens, keyboard and mouse, railings, light switches, faucets and taps, toilet flush levers, lockers and closets, and lunchroom appliances.
- Disinfect vehicle touch surfaces after use, including door handles, steering wheel, shifter, seatbelt hardware, and control buttons and levers.
- Use a disinfectant or bleach solution to destroy or inactivate the virus:
 - Use a disinfectant with a drug identification number (DIN). This number means that it has been approved for use in Canada.
 - If household or commercial disinfectant cleaning products are not available, hard surfaces can be disinfected using a mixture of 5 mL of bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) and 250 mL of water. Make sure the solution is in contact with the surface for 1 minute. Test surfaces before using a bleach solution. Bleach can be corrosive.
 - If liquids can be withstood, disinfect high-touch electronic devices (e.g., touch screens, pin pads, keyboards) with alcohol or disinfectant wipes.
- Follow the cleaning product manufacturer's safety instructions, including those for personal protective equipment, ventilation, and storage.
- Use disposable or dedicated re-usable cloths for cleaning. Change the cloths daily or when they become visibly soiled.
- Apply the disinfectant to a clean cloth. Saturate the cloth before treating touch points. Reapply as needed and between surfaces.
- Apply enough disinfectant to leave a visible film on the surface.
- Allow the surface to stay wet for the manufacturer's minimum recommended disinfectant contact time, then allow it to air dry or wipe it down.
- Place soiled re-useable cleaning materials in a closed bag, then wash and dry before re-use.
- Dispose of single use cleaning materials in a plastic lined waste container to reduce exposure when disposing of garbage.
- Use disposable gloves when handling soiled cleaning materials and garbage.

Coping with Social Isolation, Microaggression or Stigma

- Provide mental health and grief support resources for all employees.
- When helping others, encourage them to talk to someone trained in mental health first aid, or someone else they trust about what they are experiencing.
- Ask workers to contact their supervisor, employer, or employee assistance program, if available.
- Contact your local public health or community resources that offer mental health services.
- Check out organizations online:
 - Canadian Mental Health Association <https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>
 - Canadian Psychological Association <https://cpa.ca/psychologyfactsheets/>
 - Kids Help Phone <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/were-here-for-you-during-covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>

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.

<https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/>



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



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For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus>.

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.