
COVID-19 Control and Prevention Procedures

Public health measures can be implemented to prevent the spread of the virus causing COVID-19 in workplaces and other similar community settings. Further information on [preparing workplaces for COVID-19](#) is available from the World Health Organization (WHO).

Strategies that workplaces can put into effect include:

- Increase awareness and communication to staff about COVID-19.
- Encourage the use of individual measures such as frequent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and self-isolation when ill.
- Evaluate the workplace for areas where people have frequent contact with each other and share spaces and objects.
- Identify possible COVID-19 exposure risks and mitigation approaches. Although not conclusive, there may be benefit to increasing the spatial separation between desks and workstations as well as individuals (e.g., employees, customers) from each other. Ideally a 2-metre separation should be maintained, unless there is a physical barrier (e.g., cubicle, Plexiglas window).
- Increase frequency of cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (e.g., phones, elevator buttons, computers, desks, lunch tables, kitchens, washrooms, cash registers, seating areas, surface counters, customer service counters, bars, restaurant tables/menus).
- Provide access to handwashing facilities and place hand sanitizing dispensers in prominent locations throughout the workplace, if possible.
- Consider providing additional tissues should someone develop respiratory symptoms. If symptoms develop the person should immediately be separated from others, instructed on respiratory etiquette and sent home (not using public transit, if possible).
- Where feasible, adjustments to policies and procedures may be put in place to reduce social contact, such as teleworking arrangements, flexible hours, staggering start times, use of email and teleconferencing.
- For business travel, employers should be aware of the latest information on COVID-19 affected areas and any [travel health advisories](#). The risks and benefits related to upcoming business travel should be assessed and consideration given to alternative approaches such as virtually attending meetings. Returning international business travellers returning from affected areas should self-monitor for symptoms and follow advice provide PHAs regarding the recommended actions.
- Consider relaxing sick leave policies that support employees in self-isolating when ill. This includes suspending the need for medical notes to return to work (reduces the burden on an already stressed health care system).
- Employers should prepare for increases in absenteeism due to illness among employees and their families or possibly school closures. Employers should access their business continuity plans, which should include a plan for how to maintain key business functions if faced with high absenteeism. Consideration should also be given to the need for cross-training personnel to function in key positions. This is an important element of Business Continuity Planning.

- Workplace and community setting closures may be considered, based on local conditions and a risk assessment in an exceptional circumstance, such as if COVID-19 evolves into one with high severity and if many employees must be off to prevent transmission. The selection of measures will depend on the company and the type of work; some measures (e.g. cancellation or closures) may have significant economic consequences and decisions made based on a risk-benefit analysis.

Additional Precautions

- **Do not accept cash, take credit card payments over the phone or request e-transfers.**
- **Email receipts to customers.**
- **Service Technicians should practice limited contact with customers. Instead of knocking on doors, they should call to let the customer know that they have arrived.**
- **Only complete essential service calls. All non-essential services calls can be rescheduled.**
- **If there is a concern of theft of sanitizer in a portable toilet, teach your client how to remove the sanitizer at the end of the work day and how to reinstall it at the beginning of the work day.**

Solid Waste and Wastewater Management Workers and Employers

This section provides guidance for solid waste and wastewater management workers and employers. This guidance supplements the general, interim guidance for workers and employers of workers with potential occupational exposures to COVID-19.

Generally, management of waste that is suspected or known to contain or be contaminated with COVID-19 does not require special precautions beyond those already used to protect workers from the hazards they encounter during their routine job tasks in solid waste and wastewater management.

Solid Waste

Workers and employers should manage solid waste contaminated with COVID-19 as they would other regulated medical waste. COVID-19 is not a [Category A](#) infectious substance.

Use typical engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE, such as puncture-resistant gloves and face/eye protection, to prevent worker exposure to medical waste, including sharps and other items that can cause injuries or exposures to infectious materials.

Wastewater

Coronaviruses are susceptible to the same disinfection conditions in the healthcare setting as other viruses, so current disinfection conditions in wastewater treatment facilities is expected to be sufficient. This includes conditions for practices such as oxidation with sodium hypochlorite (i.e., chlorine bleach) and peracetic acid, as well as inactivation through the use of ultraviolet irradiation.

There is no evidence to suggest that additional, COVID-19-specific protections are needed for employees involved in wastewater management operations, including those at wastewater treatment facilities.

Wastewater treatment plant operations should ensure workers follow routine practices to prevent exposure to wastewater, including using the engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and personal protective equipment normally required for work tasks when handling untreated wastewater.

Symptoms and Treatment

Symptoms range from mild – like the flu and other common respiratory infections – to severe, and can include:

- fever
- cough
- difficulty breathing

Complications from the 2019 novel coronavirus can include serious conditions, like pneumonia or kidney failure, and in some cases, death. There are no specific treatments for coronaviruses, and there is no vaccine that protects against coronaviruses. Most people with common human coronavirus illnesses will recover on their own.

You should:

- drink plenty of fluids
- get rest and sleep as much as possible
- try a humidifier or a hot shower to help with a sore throat or cough

Contact Telehealth Ontario at 1 (866) 797-0000 or your local public health unit if you're experiencing symptoms of the 2019 novel coronavirus. Click [here](#) to find your local health unit.

Additional Resources

World Health Organization

Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen

Ontario Ministry of Health

The 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus

Water Environment Federation

Current Priority: Coronavirus

www.wef.org/news-hub/current-priorities/coronavirus/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Water Transmission and COVID-19

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/water.html

Public Health Agency of Canada

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Outbreak update

www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html