



COVID-19: PRECAUTIONS WHEN WORKING AS A SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES WORKER



OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS

Coronaviruses are spread primarily from person-to-person through close contact, including at work. Here are some [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with greater than 60% alcohol content).
- Wear a mask or face covering when in an indoor public place.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.



- Stay home if you are sick.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you are ill notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions you receive.

BEST PRACTICES TO STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE

RECOGNIZE AND ASSESS

According to Ontario Government, symptoms can appear in as little as a few days or as long as 14 days after being exposed to the virus. [COVID-19](#) can cause a range of symptoms including fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath.

For some people, the symptoms are like having a cold; for others they are quite severe or even life-threatening. It is important to check with your healthcare provider, Telehealth, or local Public Health Unit and follow instructions about [staying home](#) or away from public spaces to prevent the spread of the virus. The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, close contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then your face - mouth, nose, or eyes.

Close contact with a potentially infected person or touching potentially contaminated items (such as child car seats, equipment, door handles, hard surfaces, etc.) are likely to pose the greatest exposure risks. In general, close contact with other people increases the risk of exposure to someone who may be already infected and contagious.

CONTROLS

1. **Follow the requirements set out in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)** as well as policies and procedures included in the infectious disease preparedness and response plan established by your organization.

All workplace parties have roles and responsibilities to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(OHSA\)](#) and its regulations. If a [Directive](#) issued by the CMOH applies to your workplace, you must also follow those.

Workers should raise any concerns to their

- Supervisor
- Joint Health and safety Committee Or Health and Safety Representative, if applicable
- Union if applicable

Under [Section 28\(1\)](#) of the OHSA, workers have a duty to:

- Comply with the provisions of the Act and regulations



- Use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing that the worker's employer requires to be used to worn
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and which may endanger themselves or another worker
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor any contravention of the Act or Regulations or the existence of any hazard of which he or she knows

Under Ontario law, workers have the [right to refuse unsafe work](#). If health and safety concerns are not resolved internally, a worker can seek enforcement by filing a complaint with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development's Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008.

Follow your workplace safety plan and any infectious disease preparedness and response plans established by the organization should be followed. The plan should consider and address levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks. This includes how the site will [operate](#) during the pandemic including but not limited to health and safety considerations such as sanitization of sites, how employees report illnesses, how to ensure physical distancing, and how work will be scheduled.

2. **Maintain physical distancing.** [Physical distancing](#) means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons, regardless if they are well or unwell. By maintaining physical distancing you are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus. Physical distancing may not be possible when performing certain tasks. Consider asking clients to wear a face covering (non-medical or cloth mask) to protect those around them, especially in areas where they may not be able to consistently maintain physical distance, as a means of controlling a potential source of infection. In some circumstances PPE may be required for worker protection.
 - Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) that protects your eyes, nose and mouth (surgical/procedure mask and goggles or face shield) if:
 - you are required to come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering in a manner that covers that person's mouth, nose and chin in an indoor area and,
 - if you are not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person
 - Workers should be trained/employers must train workers on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.
 - Workers providing support to an individual within 2 metres should assess the need for PPE based on the type of interaction and known health status of the individual.
3. **Follow specific guidance for health and safety and infection prevention and control practices.**
 - Refer to the Ontario [Ministry of Health](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#) for COVID-19 guidance
 - Increase frequency of [cleaning](#) and disinfecting high-touch surfaces (i.e. door handles, counters, hand rails, touch screens, table tops, chairs, etc.) with appropriate cleaners and disinfectants at least twice a day and when visibly dirty.
 - [Wash hands](#) frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer
 - Proper [donning](#) and [doffing of PPE](#) and hand hygiene should be performed.



- 4. Return to Work after travel or after illness.** Stay home if you are feeling ill. Comply with screening protocols at your workplace and actively [monitor yourself](#) for any symptoms. If you detect symptoms, you should immediately distance yourself from others and go home. If possible, avoid using public transit. Ensure you notify your supervisor so that they are aware of the situation and can also notify others who may have been exposed.

Where employees have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days and are seeking to return to work, it is important to balance the protection of the health system and the continued operation of these settings. Workers who have [travelled outside of Canada](#) within the last 14 days should self-isolate for a period of 14 days starting from their arrival in Ontario. Workers should not attend work if they are sick. If returning to work after illness, workers should consult their [local public health unit](#) and their manager/occupational health and safety department to plan their safe return to work.

- 5. Demonstrate the following precautionary measures while working:**
 - Do not report to work if you are exhibiting any of the [symptoms](#) or are under [self-isolation](#) or quarantine. If you feel unwell, immediately notify your supervisor
 - Limit the amount of face-to-face contact during work activities and where you need to visit a client, practice [physical distancing whenever possible](#).
 - Use technology for communication (text messaging, video conferencing and phone calls) rather than in-person interactions where possible
 - [Complete screening by phone prior to attending clients homes or appointments and practice active screening for all persons you will encounter at the home/ clinic](#)
 - [Staff should self-monitor for COVID-19 signs and symptoms and inform their supervisor as soon as they feel unwell.](#)
 - Where PPE for close contact with clients as required by your employer
 - Limit any casual interactions with colleagues that normally occur at work
 - Participate in flexible work hours or staggered work hours to limit the number of workers at the office setting where possible
 - Be aware of outbreak measures being implemented in the workplace

Additionally, the COVID-19 outbreak is a unique and unprecedented scenario for many workers. Ensure you are taking care of both your mental health and psychological well-being, as well as your physical health, during the time. Find out [helpful tips and coping strategies](#).

- 6. Practice stringent hand hygiene.**
 - [Wash hands](#) frequently and thoroughly with soap and water for a minimum of 15 seconds.
 - If using [hand sanitizers](#), they must be alcohol-based (with 60% -90% alcohol content) to be effective. All staff should use an alcohol based hand sanitizer before entering congregate living settings
 - Avoid touching your face
 - Sneeze or cough into your sleeve or a tissue and discard it
 - Use a clean tissue or your knuckle/elbow to touch light switches, doors, buttons, etc.



EVALUATE

- Were the proper hygiene facilities available to you?
- Were you able to practice physical distancing?
- Did you have the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you require to do your job?
- Have you been provided training on the proper use, care, handling and disposal of PPE?
- Do you know what to do if you have symptoms?

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL:

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#q0>

TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/taking-care-mental-health.html>

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY-ISSUED RESOURCES ABOUT COVID-19

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources



OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The [World Health Organization](#) is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

It also provides the most up-to-date information on:

- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

PUBLIC SERVICES HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Access resources and information about COVID-19 at <https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.