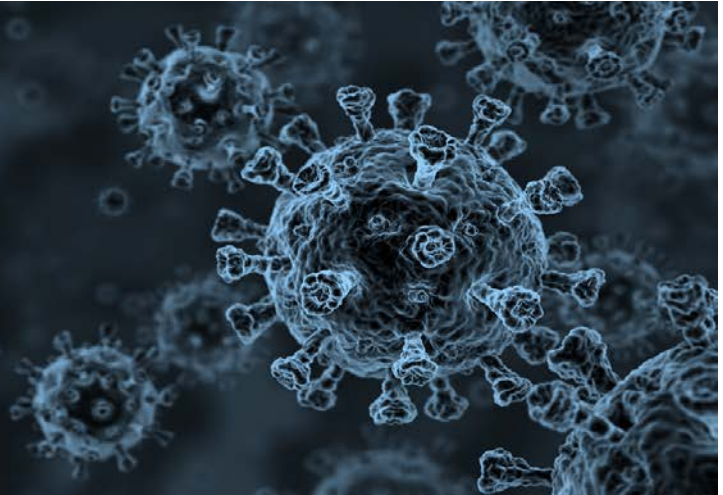




# COVID-19: PRECAUTIONS WHEN WORKING AS A LIBRARY WORKER



## 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

The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then face – mouth, nose or eyes. Here is some general guidance and [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons, including clients and co-workers.
- Wear a mask or face covering when in an indoor public place.
- Promote good hygiene such as:



- [Wash your hands](#) often with soap and water when hands are visibly soiled, before and after any breaks, at the beginning and end of their shift, and before preparing food or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol content) if hand washing is not possible.
- 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 high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Practice regular cleaning and disinfection
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer on entry to library, at self-checkout and computer workstations.
- For paper-based products, leave books untouched in a dedicated quarantine area for a period prior to handling and recirculating. Sanitizing books with liquid disinfectants can damage books and is not recommended.
- For DVDs or other materials with plastic covers, wipe them down with alcohol wipes if not quarantined.
- Minimize contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.
- If you have symptoms or you think you were exposed to COVID-19, notify your supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions you get.

## RECOGNIZE AND ASSESS

According to Health Canada, symptoms can appear in as little as a few days or as long as 14 days after being exposed to someone with the disease. [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 the face - mouth, nose, or eyes.

Close contact with patrons or touching potentially contaminated items (such as DVDs, keyboards, computers, shelves, printers, turnstiles, door handles, handrails, and other hard surfaces often touched by library visitors) 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.

## CONTROL

1. Follow the requirements set out in the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSa) as well as policies and procedures, including infectious disease preparedness and response plans established by your employer



All workplace parties have roles and responsibilities to protect workers from hazards in the workplace as set out in the OHS Act and its regulations, and the applicable directives coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Workers should raise any concerns to their:

- Supervisor
- Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative

Under [Subsection 28\(1\)](#) of the OHS Act, workers have a duty to:

- Work in compliance 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 work
- 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
- 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 the OHS Act, employers have the duty to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect workers from hazards in the workplace. Workers have [right to refuse unsafe work](#). If health and safety concerns are not resolved internally, a worker can file a complaint with the Ministry's Health and Safety Contact Centre at 1-877-202-0008. Failure of the employer to comply with the OHS Act and its regulations could result in enforcement action such as an order to comply, which may include a [stop-work order](#), upon inspection by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Follow the infectious disease preparedness and response plans established by your employer. The plan considers and addresses levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks. This includes how the workplace will [operate](#) during the COVID-19 outbreak including but not limited to health and safety considerations such as sanitization of workplaces, how workers and employers [report illnesses](#), how to ensure physical distancing, and how work will be scheduled.

2. Maintain [physical distancing](#). Physical distancing generally means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons at all times. By maintaining physical distancing, people are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus as the virus can be spread before symptoms appear (pre-symptomatic) and when the person may have contracted the virus but are minimal or no symptoms (asymptomatic).
  - Consider blocking off aisles or have one way aisle markings.
  - Alter the workplace layout of the floor by moving furniture (desks, chairs, couches, etc.) or using visual cues such as tape on the floor to enhance physical distancing
  - Rearrangement of public sit and stand work stations to ensure physical distancing. For example, leave every other terminal empty.
  - Consider if Plexiglas screening as a barrier at service counters such as circulation desk, self check-out, information desk and resource desks



- Consider curbside check-outs of material.
  - Maintain touchless delivery such as during curb side pickup by designating a drop and pick up zone
  - Maintain physical distancing during interlibrary book deliveries. This might include identifying a drop zone.
  - Encourage touchless payment by patrons, e.g. late fees
  - Limit the number of patrons in the library at one time.
  - Consider asking patrons to use a [non-medical mask](#) to protect those around them
  - Suspending all group activities and gatherings
  - Lunchrooms and break rooms must be arranged to follow physical distancing practices. Consider staggered lunch and break times to reduce the number of employees gathering.
3. Follow specific guidance for health and safety and infection prevention and control practices and measures and procedures established by the employer.
- Refer to the [Ministry of Health](#), [Public Health Ontario](#) and the [Government of Canada](#) for COVID-19 Guidance
  - In addition to routine cleaning, [clean frequently](#) touched surfaces (i.e. door handles, handrails, customer service counters, touch screens, keyboards, elevator buttons, etc.) at a minimum of twice per day. If the surfaces are visibly dirty, they should be cleaned prior to disinfection application.
  - Library workers should use or wear personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e., surgical /procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield) that the worker's employer requires to be used or worn. Workers are to be trained on the use and limitations of any PPE that the employer requires to be used by the worker.
  - Proper [donning and doffing of PPE](#) and [hand hygiene](#) should be performed.
    - 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.
4. Stay home if you are feeling ill. Comply with screening protocols at your workplace and actively [monitor yourself](#) for any symptoms and if you detect symptoms, you should immediately distance yourself from others and go home. If possible, avoiding using public transit to get home. Notify your supervisor so that they are aware of the situation and can also notify others who may have been exposed.
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.



- Limit the amount of face-to-face contact during work activities and [practice physical distancing](#) whenever possible.
- Use technology for communication (text messaging and mobile phones rather than in-person conversations)
- Avoid sharing equipment/supplies (i.e. keyboard, telephone, touch screen, equipment controls) where possible. Disinfect regularly if sharing cannot be avoided.
- Limit any casual interactions that normally occur at work.
- Consider changing out of work clothing at the end of each shift and wash them. Do not store your street clothes and work clothing in the same space unless both are clean.
- Consider discussing any underlying medical conditions that might place you at a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 with your Human Resources Department.

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 this time. Find out [helpful tips and coping strategies](#).

6. Practice stringent hand hygiene practices. Health Canada recommends following basic hygiene practices:
  - Wash hands frequently
  - Thoroughly [wash hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) containing at least 70% alcohol
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
  - Practice respiratory etiquette and 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

Ask and evaluate:

- Were the proper hygiene facilities (soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) available to you?
- Were you able to practice physical distancing?
- Are you disinfecting (i.e. disposable wipes) frequently touched surfaces routinely?
- Did you use or wear the PPE that your employer requires you to use or wear to protect you while you do your job?
- Have you been provided training on the proper use of PPE and the limitations of the PPE?
- Do you know what to do if you have symptoms of COVID-19?

## 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



Safe Environments  
Healthy Workers

[www.pshsa.ca](http://www.pshsa.ca)

## **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* (OHS Act) 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.