

Infrastructure Health and Safety Association

Guidance on on-site sanitation during COVID-19

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](#)

Best practices

Recognize hazards and assess risks: The first step to controlling risks in a workplace is to identify the risks. This applies to all workplace hazards, not just COVID-19. Identifying and controlling workplace hazards is required of all employers in Ontario under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and its regulations.

Some important COVID-19 risk information includes how it is spread and what can increase the risk of a worker becoming infected. COVID-19 can be spread at the workplace in two main ways:

1. person to person – by people who are in close contact
2. by surfaces or objects – when people touch their face with contaminated hands

The level of risk in an activity will be related to the number of opportunities for transmission of the virus. This includes how close people come to each other, how many different interactions there are between people, how often people touch surfaces or objects and how long people stay in a space.

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

It is possible for COVID-19 to be spread by people who do not have any symptoms. This makes effective control measures very important. We must act as if everyone is infected when setting up controls.

The risk of severe health outcomes is not the same for all workers. The risk increases with age and is higher for people with [certain medical conditions](#).

Recognizing how communicable diseases spread in the workplace is a key for prevention and control. The spread of infectious diseases can occur when:

- **An infected person coughs or sneezes within 2 metres (6 feet):** Many viruses transfer from person-to-person when droplets are inhaled into the lungs or land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby.
- **Sharing objects such as work tools:** Many viruses are spread when an infected person touches a surface or an object, which is then used by another person. The virus could then be transferred to the second worker when they touch their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- **Personal hygiene supplies are inadequate:** This can include the lack of soap, water, and tissues in the workplace.
- **Sanitary conditions are poor:** This can include inadequate or poorly maintained washroom facilities.
- **Individuals have a compromised health status:** People are most contagious when they are symptomatic (i.e., experiencing a fever, cough, and/or shortness of breath). However, some spread might be possible before people show symptoms.

Controls:

Infection prevention and control measures prevent the spread of the virus by breaking the chain of transmission. For example, [public health guidance](#) includes staying at least 2 metres away from others which avoids close contact; washing hands removes the virus and prevents people from touching their faces with contaminated hands.

For COVID-19 in the workplace, it is recommended that employers and business owners conduct a risk assessment to determine the most appropriate controls and actions for a particular workplace/situation. Reference the [IHSA's guide](#) on the risk assessment process to help facilitate this and review [Sample 1](#), [Sample 2](#) for examples.

Always, start by considering the most effective controls first. It is best to begin by trying to eliminate the hazard – to remove it from the workplace altogether. Where that is not possible, use multiple engineering and administrative controls first to prevent the spread. Protective equipment (including personal protective equipment (PPE) and community protective equipment) should be relied on only where engineering and administrative controls do not sufficiently reduce the risk to workers.

In addition to the above recommendations, employers should determine whether personal protective equipment (PPE)* needs to be part of their hazard control plan. The need for PPE should be based on a risk assessment taking into account environmental conditions and also

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take into consideration input from the local public health unit. Although proper use of PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other control measures.

- Workers must use personal protective equipment as required by their employer.
- Workers should be trained on the proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE.

*NOTE: Please be reminded that most face coverings (non-medical masks) have not been tested to a known standard and do not constitute PPE. In some circumstances, face coverings may be used as an effective means of source control, but should not be viewed as an appropriate substitute for physical distancing in the workplace.

1. Cleaning surfaces or objects with detergent, soap, and water is the first step.

- Cleaning does not necessarily kill germs but it can remove them and it lowers their numbers.
- Clean and sanitize the jobsite. Continuous cleaning and disinfecting of workplace surfaces and providing adequate cleaning facilities are critical for reducing the spreading of infectious diseases.
- Sanitizing reduces germs on surfaces through a chemical process. Cleaning the surfaces or objects should occur before sanitizing.
- Disinfecting destroys most germs on surfaces or objects by using chemicals. Disinfecting is recommended for spills of blood or bodily fluids. A simple disinfectant agent is a bleach solution, which is made by adding 1 cup (240 ml) of bleach to 5 gallons (18.9 l) of water.

2. How to clean surfaces and objects. To clean hard surfaces (such as stainless steel, floors, railings, light-switch plates, and doorknobs):

- Follow the instructions on the label of the container and the safety data sheet (SDS) for any hazardous cleaning products.
- Use chemicals in a well-ventilated area and NEVER mix cleaning chemicals.
- Clean surfaces with soap and water to remove all visible debris and stains.
- Rinse surfaces with clean water and wipe with a clean towel.
- Sanitize surfaces or objects with sanitizing spray. You can make your own by mixing 5 ml of bleach with 750 ml of water.
- Apply the disinfectant. To kill the virus, make sure the surface stays wet with the disinfectant for at least 10 minutes before wiping with a clean towel.
- Rinse with water and allow surface to air dry.
- Remove gloves, place in a trash bag, and discard.
- Wash hands after removing gloves.

Evaluate:

Changes to work procedures or practices related to COVID-19 may affect the way you have routinely managed other risks in the workplace. Thus, it is recommended that you consider the various preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and review and adjust accordingly if they are not working as intended or have created new risks or challenges.

Monitor your cleaning

- Monitor your supplies
- As you increase your frequency of cleaning and disinfecting, monitor your supply of disinfectant wipes, cleaning products, and cleaning gloves to ensure that you have enough.
- Monitor the frequency and location of cleaning. This will ensure that all areas get cleaned and sanitized on a regular basis. Look for any overlooked areas.

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

Develop your COVID-19 workplace safety plan: Learn how you can create a plan to help protect your workers and others from novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

[Workplace Safety Plan](#)

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

For more information, visit: ihsa.ca/COVID-19

[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

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.