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## South West Infection Prevention & Control (IPAC) Hub

- Huron Perth & Area Ontario Health Team
- Middlesex-London Health Unit
- Southwestern Public Health

### South West IPAC Hub Update

*April 25, 2022*

Dear Congregate Living Organization Partners,

Your South West IPAC Hub has created a E-newsletter every two months to communicate important IPAC news, tips, and resources specially tailored for our congregate living colleagues. We hope you find it useful and informative!

Topics Covered Today:

- Ventilation and Filtration/Technical Information
- Shower/Baths for Residents During an Outbreak
- Infection Prevention and Control Self-Assessment Tools

### **Ventilation and Filtration/Technical Information**

Indoor air quality is an integral component to maintaining the health and comfort of occupants in a building. Together, ventilation and filtration work by exhausting or capturing gases, vapours and airborne particles including virus-containing dust and aerosols. Removal of these particles will dilute their concentration in indoor air and can reduce occupant exposures. Ventilation and filtration, when used alone, cannot eliminate

exposures to pathogens, however it provides added protection when used with other public health measures (i.e., masking, physical distancing etc.).

Ventilation can be accomplished by natural means (i.e., opening a door or window) or mechanical means (i.e., motor-driven fan or blower).

Mechanical filtration involves the use of different types of fibrous media to remove particles from the airstream. A portion of the particles in air entering a filter attach to the fibrous media and are removed from the air as it passes through the filter.

Many settings have HVAC systems and there can be large variance in its operation and complexity. The basic purpose of HVAC system is to provide heating, ventilating, or air conditioning to a building and most incorporate the use of filtration to maintain or improve indoor air quality.

### **Ways to Reduce Respiratory Droplets and Aerosols by Ventilation and Filtration**

- Ensure your HVAC is properly installed, operated and inspected as per manufacturer's instructions.
- Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for specific information on maintenance, such as filter replacements and size.
- Use the highest efficiency particulate filters that are compatible with your system, without impeding airflow.
- Continuous use of exhaust fans (washroom, bathing suite, kitchen).
- Adjustment of air intake damper to increase fresh air to recirculated air ratio (professional needed)
- Arrange furniture away from air vents.
- Adjustment of thermostat fan setting from "AUTO" to "ON". The HVAC system is only able to filter the air if it is running, turn the fan setting to ON. This may result in additional costs due to the use of electricity.
- Increase natural ventilation by opening windows, when weather permits and does not pose any safety or security risk. Ensure the operation of HVAC will not be negatively impacted by doing so.

### **Portable Air Cleaners**

Portable air cleaners are available as large console and smaller tabletop devices and are intended to be used in localized areas within a building. They are used with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters that helps reduce virus particles in the air. Where natural or mechanical ventilation is not possible or sufficient, portable air cleaners may be used

to enhance indoor air quality when used with other public health strategies. Always consult with manufacturer's instruction for placement.

### **Considerations for Placement of Portable Air Cleaner**

- Ideal for use where people tend to congregate within a setting (i.e., dining areas, common rooms, visiting areas, staff room).
- Placement in the room should take into account air intake (position and height) and outflow to ensure unobstructed airflow, i.e., from furniture, curtains and room corners.
- Air cleaners tend to perform best when they are positioned in a central space, however manufacturer's instructions on placement and operation should be followed.
- While many portable units are designed to be placed on the floor, some may be designed for tabletops. Elevating air cleaners (e.g., on a stool) can help prevent re-suspension of droplets from the tabletop surface or floor if the outflow for the filter points downwards.
- Improperly placed devices may simply continue to recirculate the same volume of air. Therefore, while these devices suggest a certain volume of cleaned air every minute, this is only true if the air pulled in by the unit has not already been cleaned.
- Some portable units may generate strong air currents and care should be taken to ensure that they do not create strong air flows directly between individuals.
- If there is localized production of respiratory aerosols, placement of the air purifier to capture these aerosols (near breathing zones) may enhance effectiveness.

### **Shower/Baths for Residents During an Outbreak**

Showering and tub bathing is essential to maintain personal hygiene and well-being of residents, and this can be done safely during a facility outbreak with thorough planning.

- Showers/tubs that are dedicated to a single resident are preferred when available.
- If a communal shower/tub is used by multiple residents, try to schedule well residents first, followed by well exposed residents,

and then ill residents.

- Residents should perform hand hygiene upon leaving their room. They should be encouraged to wear a mask, if tolerated, during transport to and from the shower/tub area.
- Ensure personal items (i.e., towels and personal care items) are not kept in the communal shower/tub area.
- The shower/tub and other high-touched surfaces (i.e., grab bars, handles, faucets, shower chairs) should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Staff must wear appropriate PPE (i.e., facial protection, water resistant gowns and gloves) to prevent splashes or sprays when assisting residents with bathing. Discard single-use or disposable PPE after use. Any reusable PPE must be cleaned and disinfected.
- Bed baths may be considered if a resident is unwell or cannot be transported to a shower/tub room.

## **Infection Prevention and Control Self-Assessment Tool**

The self-assessment audit tool is designed for facilities to assess their current infection prevention and control practices. Facilities should complete this tool for ongoing implementation of best practices and to facilitate quality improvement activities when gaps are identified. This will help to decrease the spread of infectious disease between visitors, residents, and staff. Recognizing existing strengths and achievements can also build confidence within the facility.

### **For Long Term Care and Retirement Homes:**

According to Directive 3, the [IPAC self-audits](#) should be completed, at a minimum every two weeks when the home is not in an outbreak, and at a minimum once a week when the home is in an outbreak. Homes must follow current Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Guidance: Long-Term Care Homes and Retirement Homes for Public Health Units for detailed requirements and information regarding IPAC audits.

## For Other Congregate Living Organizations:

This [self-audit tool](#) provides a point-in-time assessment. It is recommended that facilities complete regular evaluation of their infection control practices based on organization's policy and needs. The score achieved from the assessment will determine audit frequency. Facilities should consider using the self-audit tool when there are changes to staffing or after an outbreak

Reference:

1. [Public Health Ontario- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning \(HVAC\) Systems in Buildings and COVID-19](#)
2. [Public Health Ontario- Use of Portable Air Cleaners and Transmission of COVID-19](#)
3. [Government of Canada- At home: Using ventilation and filtration to reduce the risk of aerosol transmission of COVID-19](#)
4. [Government of Canada-Using Ventilation and filtration to reduce aerosol transmission of COVID-19 in long-term care homes](#)
5. [Ontario Health West- Infection Prevention and Control \(IPAC\) Hub Congregate Living Organizations Webinar: The Importance of Ventilation and Filtration As an IPAC Measure](#)
6. [Peterborough Public Health- At Home Ventilation, Air Filtration, and COVID-19](#)
7. [Toronto Public Health- Long Term Care Home and Retirement Home COVID-19 Question and Answer \(Q&A\)](#)

## Contact your Core IPAC Hub

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Or contact your local satellite IPAC hub at:

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