

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Physical Barriers

Physical Barriers to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

September 21, 2020

Version 1.0

This guidance reflects the current need for protection from COVID-19 in Ontario. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, and this guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Southwestern Public Health website www.swpublichealth.ca regularly for updates and additional information.

Key Points

- When persons are unable to maintain 2 metres of distance, a physical barrier is an effective way to prevent the transmission of COVID-19
 - Physical barriers are used in conjunction with other public health recommendations
 - Physical barriers must meet size requirements to ensure effectiveness
 - Physical barriers must be installed safely and comply with building and fire codes
 - Clean and disinfect physical barriers often
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What does a physical barrier do?

- Interrupts the spread of respiratory droplets in situations where adequate physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Provides protection for patrons in spaces where physical distancing and/or use of face coverings is not possible (e.g. may be placed between tables in a restaurant/bar when tables are not 2 metres apart).
- It protects employees using a shared working space.
- It protects individuals who may be unable to wear a face covering and additional protection to those wearing a face covering.

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How to Set up Barriers

- Barriers must be large enough to cover and extend past every user's breathing zone.
 - The “breathing zone” for an individual is the circular space or bubble around each person’s face with a radius of 30cm (12 inches) starting from the tip of the person’s nose (see Figure 1).
- The specific size of the barrier required for your space will be dependent on the type of establishment and the clientele served.
 - Consider if the staff or clientele will be moving around in the area where the barrier is located. The barrier must be large enough to cover the area that the staff/patrons will be utilizing.
 - Consider variations in height differences. The barrier must be large enough to protect both the shortest and the tallest breathing zones.
- Barriers should be installed to minimize airflow around them.
 - Hanging barriers are discouraged as they can be challenging to clean, and the airflow caused by movement may make them less effective.
- Barriers should be securely affixed to the floor, desk, countertop etc. Freestanding barriers should be used with caution due to an increased risk of being knocked over.
- Installation must not compromise safety (e.g. a person’s ability to escape a room in an emergency).
- Barriers must comply with the requirement prescribed by the Ontario Building Code and Fire Code.

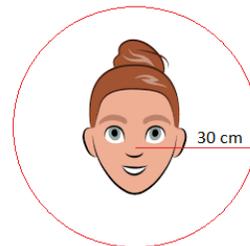


Figure 1 Breathing Zone.

Example Spaces:

Bars and Restaurants

- Barriers must be high enough to accommodate the tallest person when seated and must extend past the table's edge by 1 foot (12 inches)

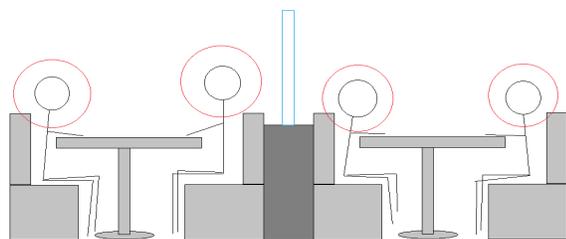


Figure 3 Barrier Height

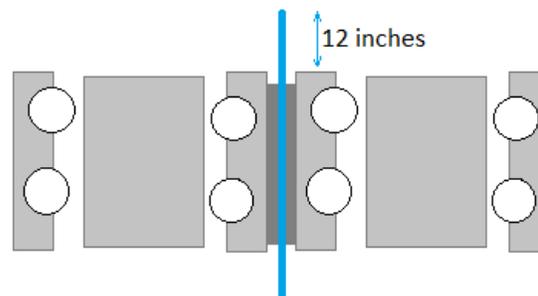


Figure 2 Barrier Width

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Checkout Counters and Reception Desks

- The barrier must be large enough to cover the space that employees will be working in and extend at least 1 foot (12 inches) beyond the working space.
- Openings may be created but must be as small as possible and be located below the breathing zone.
 - If the opening cannot be located below the breathing zone, consider offsetting the hole or having a flap. If a flap is installed, it would be regarded as a high touch surface, which needs to be cleaned and disinfected often.
 - **Speaking ports are not permitted.** Where necessary, an electronic speaking port could be installed as long as respiratory droplets cannot go through the barrier.

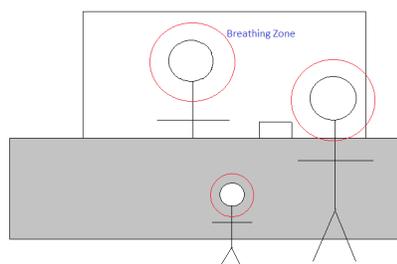


Figure 4 Reception Barriers

Shared Office Spaces

- Barriers may be used to separate employees in shared office spaces.
- Space dividers such as cubicle walls would be sufficient if the walls extend at least 1 foot beyond the working space.
- Barriers can be affixed to shared desks to create individual workspaces.
- Each workspace should be cleaned after use if going to be used by multiple people.
- Standard COVID-19 cleaning is required when used by one person alone.

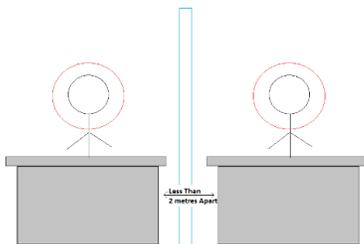


Figure 5 Desk Barrier Height

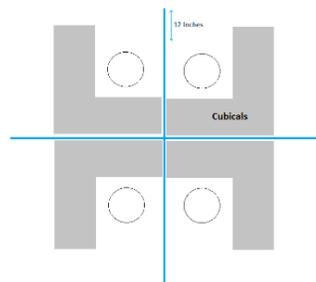


Figure 6 Desk Barrier Width

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Physical Barriers

Shared School Spaces

- If necessary, schools may use barriers in shared spaces to separate students in different cohorts—E.g. using barriers to separate desks in a library. See shared office spaces, for example.

Cleaning of Physical Barriers

- Partitions and high touch surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily.
- Remember to follow manufacturers' instructions for the cleaning products and surfaces that are being cleaned.
- Items that are shared or passed back and forth (e.g. a debit machine or a pen) should be disinfected with each use.

Additional Things to Consider

- Physical barriers are **not** a substitution for other infection control measures.
- Additional infection control measures may include:
 - Ensuring staff/patrons do not enter when ill
 - Limiting the number of patrons permitted in premises
 - Ensuring physical distancing
 - Ensuring compliance with mandatory face coverings
 - Practice good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

References

<https://ncceh.ca/content/blog/physical-barriers-covid-19-infection-prevention-and-control-commercial-settings>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/cleaning-disinfecting.html>