

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Public Health Principles for Businesses and Organizations

Public Health Requirements and Recommendations for Businesses and Organizations

March 2, 2022

Key Points

- Businesses and organizations must prepare a COVID-19 safety plan.
 - Workers should complete the online [worker screening tool](#) daily.
 - Employers must post signage for customers/patrons to screen for COVID-19.
 - Face coverings/masks are currently required in the indoor area of businesses and organizations.
 - Businesses and organizations should continue to support physical distancing where feasible.
 - Continue to regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces.
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The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the [Southwestern Public Health website](#) regularly for updates and announcements.

This document provides a summary of current public health measures required or recommended in businesses and organizations to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread. Please review the updated regulations ([Ontario Regulation 364/20 Schedules 4/5](#)) for more detailed information on requirements.

Safety Plan

- A safety plan **must** be prepared and available upon request. Information on how to create a safety plan is [found here](#).
 - The safety plan should describe the measures and procedures implemented or will be implemented to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. For example, it should include information on screening, face coverings, and cleaning and disinfection.
 - A copy of the safety plan must be posted in a conspicuous place.

Screening Staff and Patrons

- All staff and volunteers should complete the [online worker screening tool](#) each day prior to starting their shift when working in-person or on-site.

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- Businesses are required to post signage at all entrances to the premises in a location visible to the public that informs them on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 (passive screening).
 - More information on required questions for signage can be [found here](#).
 - Post the [SWPH sample visitor screening sign](#) (or other similar signage).

Face Coverings/Masks

- Face coverings that cover the nose, mouth and chin continue to be required in all indoor public spaces. Exemptions for the use of face coverings can be [found here](#).
 - Face coverings can be temporarily removed while eating or drinking and while engaged in athletic or fitness activity.
 - Staff working in indoor areas accessible only to employees who can physically distance (at least 2 metres) from all other staff members in that space do not need to wear a face covering while in this area. Businesses or organizations may decide to require face coverings at all times in employee only areas, even if physical distancing can be maintained based on a risk assessment.
 - Post a [sign](#) at the entrance indicating that all persons in the store must wear a face covering.
- Public Health Ontario recommends a respirator (KN95) or well-fitted medical mask to protect against the Omicron variant. The Public Health Agency of Canada has stated that some high-quality, three-layer non-medical masks can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 similarly to medical masks. No matter what type of mask you choose, proper fit is a key factor in its effectiveness. [Learn more here](#).

Managing Employees with COVID-19 Symptoms/Exposure

- Staff should not come to work if they have:
 - Symptoms of COVID-19
 - Tested positive for COVID-19 (on a rapid test or PCR test)
 - A household member with symptoms of COVID-19 or who has tested positive in the last five to ten days. Self-isolation guidance is based on the vaccination status of the case.
 - Been identified as a close contact of a case of COVID-19 outside of their home and they are not fully vaccinated
- Staff should complete the [online worker screening tool](#) which provides direction on self-isolation requirements. You can learn more about self-isolation requirements at www.ontario.ca/exposed or on the [Southwestern Public Health website](#).
- Have a clear procedure in place for staff to notify a supervisor/manager if they are not able to attend work. Maintain flexible policies so employees can self-isolate when necessary. The

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Ontario COVID-19 Worker Income Protection Benefit is available until July 31, 2022 to support employees without paid sick time.

- If an employee becomes ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at work, they must go home right away to self-isolate.
- If an employee has symptoms of COVID-19, one negative result on a rapid antigen test is not sufficient to shorten isolation. If two rapid antigen tests completed within 24-48 hours of each other are both negative, the employee can end isolation when symptoms are improving for 24 hours. View our [Guidance on Rapid Antigen Test Use](#) for more information.

Encourage Physical Distancing Where Feasible

- Physical distancing is an effective public health measure to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Businesses and organizations should continue to support physical distancing of 2 metres where feasible.
- Enabling staff to work from home may allow for improved physical distancing and may reduce employee absenteeism.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and common areas such as door handles, counters, cabinet doors, debit machines, elevator buttons, light switches, faucets, toilet handles, handrails, touch screen surfaces and keypads.
- Washrooms available for customer use must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary environment.
- Encourage regular hand hygiene by placing hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) at facility entrances and exits. Recommend washing hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Only use disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) that confirms they are approved for use in Canada. Follow manufacturer's instructions and check the expiry date of products.

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors where possible. Avoid recirculating air.
- Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are adequately maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear. Seating and activities should be arranged away from high airflow areas (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- Rooms, where indoor ceiling fans are used should have an upward airflow rotation.

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- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.

Vaccination

- Southwestern Public Health encourages all workplaces to maintain workplace vaccination policies for employees currently in place. See our [Guidance for Workplace Vaccination Policies](#) for more information.
- All businesses and organizations should encourage and facilitate employees in obtaining COVID-19 vaccine booster doses as suggested by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. Visit the [Southwestern Public Health vaccine webpage](#) to learn more about upcoming COVID-19 vaccine clinics.
- Provincial proof of vaccination requirements for patrons at businesses and organizations have been lifted. Businesses and organizations may continue to choose to require proof of vaccination voluntarily but must do so in accordance with all applicable laws and may benefit from legal advice before proceeding.

Additional Resources

[Ontario Regulation 364/20 \(see Schedule 4/5\)](#)
[Ontario Public Health Measures and Advice Webpage](#)
[Ontario Resources to Prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

If you have further questions about managing COVID-19, please reach out to our COVID-19 Response Centre at 1-800-922-0096 ext. 9 or visit our website at www.swpublichealth.ca for updated information.