

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Beach Safety

## Guidance for Beach Safety and Physical Distancing

June 2, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, and this guidance is subject to change. The following suggestions are intended to help with municipal preparations for when beaches open. Visit the Southwestern Public Health website [www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca) and social media channels regularly for updates and additional information.

Emergency orders in Ontario are in effect and are subject to change. This includes an order restricting the number of people who can gather at one time. To keep up to date with provincial emergency orders and closures, visit <https://www.ontario.ca/page/emergency-information>.

**Limiting the gathering of crowds/large groups of people in settings such as public beaches is essential to reduce the spread of COVID-19.**

### Staff and Visitor Safety

- Post **signage** at all parking kiosks, washrooms and walkways for those entering the beach area about signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and the requirement to physically distance from others by 2 meters while at the beach
- Staff and visitors must practice physical distancing by staying at least two metres away from others (see tips below to encourage physical distancing with visual cues)
- Staff and visitors should be advised to practice good hand hygiene (frequent hand washing, alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and respiratory etiquette (sneezing into a bent elbow or disposable tissue)
  - A **wash your hands poster** should be placed in all washrooms.
  - If budget permits, consider installing hand sanitizer stations or encourage visitors to bring their own personal hand sanitizer (with at least 60% alcohol) to the beach
- Remind staff and visitors to stay home if feeling unwell. If they become unwell while at the beach, they should go home immediately. To determine next steps and who to contact, individuals can complete an **online self-assessment** or call **1-800-922-0096 x 9**
- Consider training lifeguards, bylaw officers, and staff to monitor for large groups gathering outside the marked areas and what to do if a group refuses to separate upon request. Consider issuing fines for those who refuse to follow the rules in place

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- Suggest that beach users wear a **non-medical facial mask** when travelling through the beach area if and/or when physical distancing is not possible or difficult

## Cleaning and Disinfection

- Follow standard protocols for routine cleaning and disinfection. In addition to routine cleaning, high touch surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, shower handles, parking metres, counters, and handrails should be cleaned and disinfected twice daily
- Encourage beach goers through public education to bring their own water bottle to the beach. Water fountain mouthpieces should be regularly cleaned and disinfected according to manufacturer's recommendations
- Common cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. Disinfectants with a Drug Identification number are approved for use in Canada
- See fact sheet for **cleaning and disinfection in public settings**. Ensure public washrooms are cleaned and disinfected frequently, at least twice per day

## Water Quality

- COVID-19 is largely transmitted through respiratory droplets that can spread up to two metres. There is currently no evidence that the virus is transmitted through water
- Regular beach water testing will begin once provincial orders are lifted and beaches re-open. Results are posted to Southwestern Public Health's **website**. If results show the bacteria level in the beach water is unsafe for swimming, a warning sign will be posted at the beach to indicate the water may pose a risk to health and swimming is not recommended. Regular beach water testing does not test for the presence of COVID-19

## Tips to Encourage Physical Distancing and Enable Crowd Control

- Limit the total number of people on the beach at one time. This can be accomplished through the following suggested actions:
  - Limit the hours when the beach is open to the public and/or the duration of time people from one household are permitted to visit the beach (e.g. 2-3 hours)
  - Section the beach off into numbered areas with a specified number of people allowed in each area at one time
  - Consider a limit on the number of trips allowed per season for each vehicle. This could be based on the license plate number entered into the parking kiosk or the mobile app used to pay for municipal parking

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- Consider issuing a set number of public passes or vouchers to visit the beach on a given day. This would enable crowd control at the beach and could be coordinated with the purchase of a parking pass in advance. (e.g. one paid pass permits beach access and parking for a specified day and timeframe)
- Consider the use of colourful stakes, pegs, or small flags to indicate the area where one family or household (people living in the same household) may reside while at the beach. These areas should be spaced 2 meters apart
- Establish walkways to the shoreline to facilitate pedestrian movement to and from the water/lake that permits physical distancing, using directional arrows, flags etc.
- Post signage in all parking lots (e.g. at parking kiosks) and other visible areas to inform visitors about the visual cues in place for physical distancing and the expectations for safe and responsible beach use
- Ensure municipal staff including lifeguards are trained on monitoring the public health measures in place (such as physical distancing) to protect the public's health and safety

## Social and Recreational Activities

- Prohibit organized and contact sports with large groupings, such as beach volleyball. Keep volleyball courts closed to the public or open them only for use by one household at a time
- Permit activities such as playing frisbee or catch that allows for physical distancing
- Picnic shelters/pavilions or playgrounds near the beach should remain closed as they allow for multiple families or groups to gather in close proximity at one time

## Communication and Culture

- Work with neighbouring municipalities and Southwestern Public Health staff to deliver clear, consistent messaging about the expectations for safe and responsible beach use during the COVID-19 pandemic