

# COVID-19 Guidance for Handling Materials

Updated September 11, 2020

This document provides general public health guidance for the safe handling of returned or delivered materials.

Organizations and business should refer to the Province of Ontario's [sector specific guidance](#) for additional information on protecting workers, customers and the general public from COVID-19.

## COVID-19 transmission and survival on surfaces

- COVID-19 is spread mainly from person-to-person through the respiratory droplets of someone with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres (six feet) through coughs, sneezes or talking. COVID-19 can also be transmitted when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touches their mouth, nose, or eyes.
- COVID-19 [can survive on surfaces from several hours to days](#) depending on surface type, temperature and humidity.
- While it is possible that COVID-19 can be spread from a person touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose, or eyes, to date, there have been [no specific reports that have directly demonstrated this type of transmission](#).

## Recommendations for handling returned or delivered materials

- Encourage electronic submission and delivery of materials where possible (for example, bills, invoices or receipts).
- Promote physical distancing by using a contactless method for receiving and distributing materials (for example, use a designated drop-off or pick-up box).
- Materials that can be easily cleaned and disinfected (for example, non-porous materials such as glass, metal, and plastic) should be disinfected regularly and between users. The COVID-19 virus is easily inactivated by using simple disinfectants such as store-bought [disinfectants](#), or a [diluted bleach solution](#) that is prepared daily.
- Materials that are unable to withstand disinfection (for example, porous and fragile materials such as books, paper, and fabric/clothing) should be stored for a period of time in a dedicated area or room. The period can vary from a minimum of 24 hours to a maximum of 3 days.
- Individuals should be encouraged to [wash their hands](#) frequently for at least 15 seconds with soap and water or using an alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub, particularly after touching or handling materials, and to avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- Gloves can be used when handling materials. Employers should train staff on [how to remove and dispose of gloves](#) (refer to the following [video](#)).
- In addition to routine cleaning, ensure frequently touched surfaces in the premises (for example, door handles, light switches, touch screens) are [cleaned and disinfected](#) at least twice a day and when visibly dirty. Consider enhanced cleaning of common areas.

## Additional resources

- Halton Region Public Health
  - [Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
- Province of Ontario
  - [Province of Ontario: Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
- Health Canada
  - [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Workplace Safety and Prevention Services
  - [Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for Retail Sector during COVID-19](#)
- Infrastructure Health and Safety Association
  - [Guidance on handling and receiving packages \(all persons at work or at home\) during COVID-19](#)
- Other
  - [WHO - Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: implications for infection prevention precautions](#)
  - [Federation of Ontario Public Libraries - Pick-Up and Delivery Services: Guidance for Public Libraries](#)
  - [American Libraries Association - How to Sanitize Collections in a Pandemic](#)

For more information and updates, visit [halton.ca/COVID19](https://halton.ca/COVID19) or call 311.