

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance: Places of Worship

Last updated September 17, 2021

This document outlines guidance for places of worship, to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. It does not replace guidance from the Province. This document is for information purposes only, and shall not be construed as legal advice.

Provincial Roadmap to Reopen at a glance

On July 16, Ontario moved into Step 3 of the [Roadmap to Reopen](#). Residents, organizations, and businesses must abide by the public health measures for Step 3. See [O. Reg. 364/20, Schedules 1, 2 and 3](#), for regulations for Step 3. The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other health experts will continue to monitor the data to determine when it is safe to exit the Roadmap.

Below are some of the activities that may apply to organizations and businesses for each step.

For specific questions about COVID-19 provincial regulations, please contact the **Stop the Spread Business Information Line** at 1-888-444-3659.

Step 3

- Indoor and outdoor religious services, rites or ceremonies capacity limited to permit physical distancing of two metres
 - An associated social gathering or reception is subject to the restrictions in “Social gatherings and organized public events” unless it is held at a meeting or event space or a food or drink establishment (in which case it would be subject to the rules specific to those facilities)
- All persons attending the wedding, funeral, religious service, rite or ceremony must comply with public health guidance on physical distancing

Ontario's enhanced COVID-19 vaccine certificate

Starting September 22, 2021, the provincial government will require certain businesses and settings to obtain proof of vaccination from customers/patrons. For more information refer to the [Proof of Vaccination Guidance for Businesses and Organizations](#).

Instructions for workplaces from Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health

Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health (MOH) issued [amended Instructions to businesses and organizations](#) to help keep staff and customers/patrons safe. The instructions take effect at 12:01 a.m. on **Friday, September 10, 2021**. They combine key existing requirements from the Province and Halton Region Public Health, with some new requirements. **Compliance with these instructions is mandatory.**

Workplace vaccination

Workplace vaccination policy

To reduce COVID-19 transmission in the workplace, Halton Region's MOH recommends all local employers have a [workplace COVID-19 vaccination policy](#). For workplaces with more than 100 workers physically present, Halton Region Public Health requires mandatory [COVID-19 safety plans](#) and vaccination policies in place by September 22, 2021.

Encourage everyone to get a COVID-19 vaccine

Getting vaccinated is one of the ways to stop the spread of COVID-19. Here are some ways you can support vaccination at your workplace:

- Develop a [workplace COVID-19 vaccination policy](#)
- Ensure employees are aware that everyone in Canada is eligible to receive a vaccine for free. Proof of identity is required but a health card is not required for vaccination.
- Share [COVID-19 vaccine resources](#), with staff, available in multiple languages

Additional COVID-19 public health measures

The following COVID-19 Public Health Measures are recommended by Halton Region Public Health should be considered in all steps of Ontario's [Roadmap to Reopen](#).

Maximize physical distancing

- Ensure a minimum physical distance of two metres (six feet) can be maintained between all individuals that are not in the same household by:
 - Controlling the flow of individuals to prevent crowding (entrances, exits, hallways and restrooms).
 - Spacing out seating (members of the same household may sit close together).
 - Using signage and floor markings to direct flow of traffic.
- Consider hosting services without gathering in-person if possible (for example, offer services online or by telephone, closed circuit radio, video conference/recordings or drive-in services).
- Require that attendants register or sign-up in advance to attend the service, by e-mail or telephone.
- Adapt or suspend regular childcare and children's programming. Childcare for infants is discouraged. Childcare or children's programming must comply with [Early Years Guidelines](#).

Reduce physical contact

- Suspend social gatherings before or after in-person services; suspend serving of food and beverages.
- Avoid rituals involving close physical contact (for example, baptism, communion or any similar activity) or shared items (for example, drinking from a chalice and passing a candle). If these rituals must be performed, use appropriate personal protective equipment and disinfect shared items between uses.
- Provide a designed area to offer donations, using online/e-transfer or debit/credit card tap machines instead of passing around offering collection.

Wear a mask and use personal protective equipment (PPE)

- [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) requires individuals to wear a mask in indoor workplaces and public spaces, unless exempt.
- Masks should be worn when physical distance of 2 metres (six feet) cannot be maintained and cannot be separated by Plexiglass or a barrier.
- PPE (surgical/procedure mask and eye protection i.e. goggles or face shield) is required to be worn by workers when a distance of 2 metres (six feet) cannot be maintained from another person not wearing a mask indoors and cannot be separated by Plexiglass or a barrier.
- Masks can be removed when eating or drinking, but individuals must maintain physical distancing of two metres (six feet) between them.
- Remind congregants, volunteers and staff that masks do not replace other important public health measures, such as screening, physical distancing, washing hands frequently, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve and staying home when ill.

Keep hands and surfaces clean

- [Post signage](#) to encourage people to perform hand hygiene upon entry and exit of the building for at least 15 seconds with soap and water or use an alcohol based hand rub (60-90% alcohol). Washing with soap and water is preferred if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide alcohol-based (60-90% alcohol) hand rub stations at the entrances and throughout the facility.
- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces and common areas.
- Discontinue use of holy water stoup.

Keep music safe

- Adapt or suspend singing, choirs, and the playing of wind or brass instruments.
 - Consider audio or video recordings instead of live singing or wind or brass instrumental music.
 - Group singing is strongly discouraged. The number of persons singing should be limited to the fewest possible.
 - Anyone singing or playing wind or brass instruments should be separated from others by a barrier and should maintain two metres (six feet) distance from others.

Additional resources

- Halton Region Public Health:
 - [Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Restaurants, Bars, Food Trucks and other Food and Drink Establishments](#) (if food, snacks and/or beverages are offered at your facility)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Events and Gatherings](#)
 - [Instructions for workplaces from Halton Region's Medical Officer of Health](#)
 - [Mental Health Resources and Supports](#)
- Government of Ontario:
 - [COVID-19 Advice: Religious Services, Rites or Ceremonies](#)
 - [Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for Places of Worship During COVID-19](#)