

# COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Events and Gatherings

Updated October 2, 2020

This document provides general public health guidelines for those hosting or organizing an event or gathering. This document does not replace guidelines from the Province such as [Guidance for professional meeting and event facilities during COVID-19](#).

Facilities that host events must also follow relevant requirements and legislation including the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#), [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act](#) and [Halton Region's By-law 47-20](#).

## COVID-19 transmission

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.

## Consider other ways to connect

- Be aware that gathering in groups poses a risk for spreading COVID-19 to people in our community, including those most vulnerable. It can also place a strain on our public health and health care resources.
- Keep in mind that some people are at greater risk for severe illness (for example, those over 70 years, or with weakened immunity or underlying health conditions).
- Consider ways to reduce the need to gather in-person by holding the event online or postponing the event to another time.
- If the gathering is necessary, reduce the amount of time that people gather indoors by:
  - staggering times for arrival and departure;
  - shortening the length of time for your event, and;
  - holding your event outdoors where possible.
- Be creative and find ways to build relationships and maintain social connections to support the mental health and well-being of family, friends, neighbours and community that ensure physical distancing.

## Screen for COVID-19 symptoms

- Ask guests who feel unwell not to attend your event, stay home and connect with their health care provider.
- Ask guests to complete Ontario's COVID-19 [self-assessment tool](#) before arriving.
- Place [signage](#) at entrances informing guests that they should not enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms. See also [protect yourself and others](#).
- If feasible:
  - Actively screen guests prior to entry by asking if they have COVID-19, COVID [symptoms](#), have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days or have had close

contact with someone who has or may have COVID-19. Do not permit entry to those who answer yes to any of these questions.

- Some people who perform an essential job or function may be [exempt](#) from having to quarantine for 14 days when returning from travel outside of Canada. Individuals who advise they are exempt and answer 'No' to the other screening questions may be allowed to enter.
- Encourage those who answer 'Yes' to one or more questions to go to home, and contact their local health care provider or book an appointment at a local [Assessment Centre](#) for testing.
- Workers who conduct screening should be behind a physical barrier or stand at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from guests, if this is not possible, workers should wear a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection.
- Keep a record of all guests (including names, contact information, dates and times) who enter the facility. These records must comply with privacy requirements and could support case and contact tracing by the local public health unit in the event of an outbreak.

### Maintain physical distance

- Ensure a physical distance of two metres (six feet) is maintained at all times by all people who are not from the same household.
- Limit **unmonitored, private social gatherings** (for example, dinners, BBQs or wedding receptions held at private residences or parks) to no more than 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors, provided the space allows guests to maintain a physical distance of two metres (six feet) from others. Indoor limits cannot be combined with outdoor limits.
- Events or gatherings that are held in staffed businesses or facilities (for example, bars, restaurants, cinemas, convention centres, gyms, places of worship and recreational facilities) are restricted to gatherings of up to 50 people indoors and up to 100 people outdoors, excluding workers or performers.
- **Professional meeting and event facilities**, including convention centres, hotels, motels, resorts, banquet halls and conference centres, can have up to 50 guests, excluding workers or performers, for each indoor room or event space within the facility. In outdoor spaces, a gathering limit of 100 people must not be exceeded. Indoor limits cannot be combined with outdoor limits.
  - Each 50-person dedicated indoor space should be distinct or separated by an impermeable barrier with enough space to allow guests to maintain a physical distance of two metres (six feet) from others within each room.
  - Trade shows or any events requiring guests to mingle are prohibited at this time.
- Remove surplus furniture and supplies from walkways so guests can move easily. When arranging the dining space, position chairs to be two metres between guests seated at different tables.
- Use [signage](#), tape or floor markings (especially for line-ups) to support physical distancing. Organize your space to allow for a one-way flow of people from entrance to exit.
- Encourage guests to remain seated and stay within their dedicated space unless using the washroom.
- For multi-day events, guests should remain with the same group.
- Encourage guests to download the [COVID Alert app](#).

## Reduce physical contact

- Conduct registration, check-in and payment using online or contactless options.
- Avoid or limit the sharing of equipment (for example, audiovisual equipment).
- Access to the facility should only be permitted to staff and registered guests attending the event.
  - Public access to event spaces should not be permitted.
- Keep doors and windows open, where possible and while maintaining the appropriate security, to minimize the touching of door handles and to increase ventilation.

## Require the use of face coverings or non-medical masks

- For indoor gatherings in public places, including banquet halls and convention centers, require anyone entering the premise to wear a face covering or non-medical mask while inside the facility, as per the [Halton Region By-law 47-20](#), unless exempt.
- Exemptions include individuals under five years of age and staff within an area designated for employees and not for public access, or within, or behind a physical barrier.
- Ask guests to wear a face covering or non-medical mask at unmonitored, private social gatherings, and provide masks to guests who require them.
- Encourage the [proper use](#) and disposal of face coverings and non-medical masks.
- Remind guest and staff that even when wearing a face covering or non-medical mask, it is important to continue practicing physical distancing, washing hands frequently and staying home when ill.
- For outdoor gatherings, communicate that non-medical masks or face coverings are recommended for situations when physical distancing becomes a challenge.

## Keep hands and surfaces clean

- Post [signage](#) to encourage guests to wash their hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use alcohol-based (60-90 per cent alcohol) hand rub. Washing with soap and water is preferred, if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide adequate hand hygiene supplies, including alcohol-based (60-90 per cent alcohol) hand rub at entrances and exits and throughout the facility, including high-traffic areas such as lobbies and washrooms.
- Remind guests about cough and sneeze etiquette and to avoid touching their face. Provide tissues and no-touch waste receptacles.
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and common areas such door handles, counters, cabinet doors, elevator buttons, light switches, faucets, toilet handles, hand rails, touch screen surfaces and keypads. See also [Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#).
- Use products that are [approved by Health Canada](#), with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe use.
- Ensure that each room is cleaned and disinfected between each event, including AV equipment, podiums, tables and chairs.
- Clean and disinfect shared objects frequently and conduct hand hygiene before and after use of shared equipment.

- Remove non-essential items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected.
- Where possible, avoid the use of linens.
- See [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#) for guidance about cleaning and disinfecting public washrooms.

### Be mindful serving food

- Consider serving individually plated meals or prepackaged food and drink to minimize handling. Avoid self-serve buffets.
- Designate one person or a limited number of people to distribute food.
- Limit the use of shared items when enjoying food together. Consider:
  - Providing single-use, individually wrapped utensils and condiments.
  - Providing different coloured or marked cups or glassware, to avoid confusion.
  - Not providing shared food/beverage containers (such as pitchers of water and salt & pepper shakers).
  - Setting up small, individual bowls for snacks instead of one large one.
  - Discouraging guests from sharing food from their plate with other guests.

### Ensure building ventilation is properly maintained

- Ensure heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are maintained and operating as designed.
- Any changes to ventilation systems should be carried out in consultation with a professional.
- Limit the use of overhead ceiling fans and portable pedestal fans as much as possible in common spaces. If fans are used, minimize air flow that directs current from one person directly towards another.

### Plan for weddings, funerals and religious services, rites, or ceremonies

- Limit indoor wedding ceremonies, funerals, or religious services, rites, or other ceremonies to 30 percent of the building capacity with physical distancing measures in place. Limit these events, when held outdoors, to 100 people with physical distancing measures in place.
- For social gatherings connected to these events (for example, wedding receptions), follow the indoor and outdoor limits:
  - 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors if held in at a private residence or park.
  - 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors (excluding staff), if held at a staffed business or facility (for example, restaurant or convention centre).
    - Tents with side walls down are considered an indoor space. Tents with walls up and a roof only are considered an outdoor space.
    - Do not combine limits for indoor and outdoor gatherings, or weddings, funerals, or religious events.
- Practice physical distancing from people who are not from the same household. This applies to seating at tables and other situations.

- Be aware that dancing together at weddings should be limited to people within the same household. Hired performers are permitted to dance provided they maintain physical distancing from guests.
- See [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Places of Worship](#).

### Keep staff and guests safe

- Use the provincial [screening tool for workplaces](#) to actively screen staff before each shift. If a staff member screens positive and/or if they develop [symptoms](#), direct them to:
  - return or stay home;
  - contact their health care provider or book an appointment at a local [Assessment Centre](#) for testing; and
  - [self-isolate](#) at home for 14 days.
- Ensure appropriate personal protective equipment is available on-site for staff at all times and all staff are trained on [proper use](#).
- Ensure protocols are in place if staff or patrons experience symptoms of [COVID-19](#), including:
  - Immediately isolating the individual from others and asking them to wear a mask.
  - Limiting contact with the person and maintaining a physical distance of two metres (six feet) as much as possible.
  - Cleaning and disinfecting all surfaces that may have come into contact with the symptomatic individual.
- Maintain flexible policies to allow staff to stay home to care for a sick family member or self-isolate if required.
- Educate staff on public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including physical distancing, proper frequent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and cleaning and disinfection.

### 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)
- Province of Ontario:
  - [Guidance for professional meeting and event facilities](#)

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