

COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Organizations and Businesses

Updated January 15, 2021

This document provides general Public Health guidelines for owners or operators of organizations and businesses. This document does not replace guidance from the Province, including [O. Reg. 11/21](#) and [O. Reg. 82/20](#). For specific questions about COVID-19 provincial regulations, please contact the **Stop the Spread Business Information Line** at 1-888-444-3659.

Operators must also abide by:

- Provincial [sector-specific guidelines](#) and [guidance documents](#).
- Relevant legislation, including [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) that requires the wearing of non-medical masks in enclosed public places.
- Additional guidelines provided by coordinating bodies specific to the organization or business.

COVID-19 transmission

Current evidence indicates that COVID-19 is spread mainly from person-to-person through the respiratory droplets of someone infected with COVID-19. The respiratory droplets can travel up to two metres (six feet) through coughing, sneezing 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.

State of Emergency and Stay-At-Home Order

On [January 12](#), 2021, the Ontario government declared a State of Emergency and issued a stay-at-home order under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA), [O. Reg. 11/21: Stay-At-Home Order](#), which came into effect January 14, 2021.

Businesses and organizations must also continue to abide by the public health measures outlined in [O. Reg. 82/20: Rules for Areas in Stage 1](#) including:

General Guidelines:

- **Operating hours** of 7am to 8pm with some exceptions such as restaurants and bars.
- **Remote work** should happen in all industries to the greatest extent possible. Employers should enable and support workers to work remotely and accommodate household needs related to virtual education and dependent care.
- Non-medical masks or **face coverings** are required in all indoor workplaces and indoor public spaces, by all staff, essential visitors and patrons with [limited exemptions](#).
- Workers must use additional **eye protection** where patrons without face coverings are within two metres of workers, and are not separated by plexiglass or other impermeable barrier.
- Owners and operators must ensure patrons maintain a physical distance of two metres (six feet) at all times both inside and outside venues managed by venue;
- All staff (workers and essential visitors) must be **screened** before coming to work using the COVID-19 [screening tool for workplaces](#).
- A [safety plan](#) must be developed and made available and posted where visible to those working or attending the business.
- Equipment and washrooms must be cleaned and disinfected frequently.

Public health measures for businesses permitted to open

- **Gatherings:** Indoor gatherings are not permitted and the province has established a limit of 5 people for outdoor social gatherings, provided physical distancing can be maintained. Please note, in Halton both indoor and outdoor gatherings are not recommended.
- **Businesses or facilities open to the public must limit capacity to 50% per room,** provided every member of the public is able to maintain two metres (six feet) from every other person.
- All business and organizations that provide retail sales **must post a sign visible to the public that states their maximum capacity number.** This includes:
 - Supermarkets, convenience stores, indoor farmer's markets, and other stores that **primarily sell food; and**
 - Pharmacies
- **Limit capacity to 25% per room** open to the public.
 - **Discount and Big Box Retailers** permitted to open if sell groceries to the public
 - **Stores that sell liquor,** including beer, wine, and spirits
- **Religious services** including weddings are limited to 10 people indoors and 10 people outdoors. See [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Places of Worship](#) for more information.
- **Libraries** can open for contactless curbside, delivery, and pick-up. Must disinfect or quarantine materials before recirculation. Recording of contact information is required.
- **Telecommunications and IT** The public may only enter these businesses for repairs or technical support by appointment only.
- **Community centres** for child care centres, mental health and addictions support services (up to 10 people) are permitted to be open.
- **Short term rentals** such as cottages and cabins are open only to individuals who are in need of housing.

Not Permitted or Closed (with exceptions)

- **Indoor gatherings:** No indoor organized public events and social gatherings, except with members of same household.
- **Meeting spaces:** Closed with limited exceptions for child care centres, court services, government services, mental health and addictions support services (up to 10 people), and social services. Recording of contact information is required.
- **Retail and food and drink establishments:** Closed except for curbside pickup, drive through, or delivery only. This includes:
 - **Cannabis stores**
 - **Garden centres**
 - **General retail** such as pet, hardware, and computer stores.
 - **Malls:** access permitted for those businesses and organization that are permitted to be open. No loitering permitted.
 - **Note. Motor vehicle sales** are by appointment only.
- **Sports and recreational fitness:** closure of indoor and outdoor facilities, with limited exemptions for high performance athletes, parasport athletes, and specified professional leagues and those opened for specified purposes such as child care. See [COVID-19 Public Health Guideline: Outdoor Recreational Spaces](#) for more information.

- **Closed or not permitted:**

- Amusement parks, water parks
- Bathhouses and sex clubs
- Casinos, bingo halls, and gaming establishments
- Cinemas (no drive-in or drive through events either)
- Day camps for children
- Horse racing (training permitted)
- Indoor pools, fitness centres or other recreational facilities that are part of hotels, motels, lodges, cabins, cottages, resorts or other shared rental facilities.
- In-person driving instruction – not permitted, except for drivers of commercial motor vehicles
- Motorsports
- Museums
- Night clubs and strip clubs (permitted if operate as a food or drink establishment)
- Open houses (real estate)
- Performing arts: Closed with limited exemptions for the purposes of rehearsing or performing a recorded or broadcast event.
- Personal care services
- Tour and guide services
- Zoos, aquariums

Additional COVID-19 Public Health Measures

Businesses or organizations must operate in compliance with the advice, recommendations, and instructions of public health officials, including on physical distancing and cleaning or disinfecting.

The following COVID-19 Public Health Measures are recommended by Halton Region Public Health.

Screen for COVID-19-like symptoms

- Place [signage](#) at entrances informing people that they should not enter if they have COVID-19-like symptoms.
- Recommend that patrons complete Ontario's [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) prior to arriving.
- If feasible or required:
 - [Actively screen](#) people prior to entry by asking if they have COVID-19, COVID-like [symptoms](#), have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days and are not [exempt](#) from travel restrictions, or have had close contact with someone who has or may have COVID-19. Workers conducting screening should be behind a physical barrier or stand at least 2 metres (six) feet from others. If this is not possible, workers should wear a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection.
 - Maintain a log of the people who enter the premises to assist with contact tracing if needed. Include name, contact number or email and date in the log. Keep logs for 30 days before destroying.

Maximize physical distancing

- Ensure a minimum distance of two metres (six feet) is kept between all people who are not part of the same household.
- Limit the number of people inside the premises at one time to ensure physical distancing can be maintained and as outlined by the province.
- Discourage people from congregating in common spaces by spacing out seating or removing it completely.

- Remove surplus furniture and supplies from walkways to allow ease of movement.
- Encourage people to maintain physical distance by using [signage](#), tape or floor markings.
- Organize your space to allow for a one-way flow of people from entrance to exit.

Reduce physical contact

- Maximize the use of outdoor spaces as much as possible to reduce indoor contact with others.
- Increase online and phone-based services.
- Offer curbside delivery or pick-up whenever possible.
- If small groups are required (for example, registered classes and drop-in programming):
 - Avoid mixing participants between different groups.
 - Stagger start and end times of programs to reduce congestion.
- Encourage the use of contactless payments whenever possible. If handling cash, use alcohol-based hand rub after each transaction and avoid touching your face.
- Consider installing plexiglas or other transparent barriers where there will be close contact between people.
- If carpooling is required:
 - Limit the number of people in the vehicle.
 - Wear a non-medical mask or face covering.
 - Open the windows to increase air circulation.
 - Practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.

Keep hands and surfaces clean

- Post [signage](#) to encourage people to wash hands frequently for at least 15 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based (60-90% 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% alcohol) hand rub at entrances and exits.
- Remind people about good 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.
- Where possible, avoid sharing items (for example, pens and other handheld equipment).
- Remove non-essential items that cannot be disinfected (for example, magazines and toys).

Wear non-medical masks

- [Consolidated By-law 47-20](#) and [O. Reg. 82/20](#) requires individuals to wear a non-medical mask or face covering in indoor workplaces and public spaces.
- Non-medical masks or face coverings should also be worn in other situations (for example, outdoors) when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Masks can be removed when eating or drinking while seated or actively engaging in physical activity.
- Do not remove masks to consume food or drink while walking through a business, workplace or facility.
- Non-medical masks do not replace other important public health measures, such as physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve and staying home when feeling ill.
- Train staff on the [proper use](#), removal and disposal of non-medical masks.

Keep staff and volunteers safe

Organizational Policies

- Use the provincial [screening tool for workplaces](#) to actively screen staff before each shift. Encourage staff and volunteers to self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 and if they develop symptoms:
 - 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.
- Ensure [appropriate personal protective equipment](#) is available on-site for staff at all times and all staff are trained on [proper use](#).
- Maintain flexible policies to allow people to stay home to care for a sick family member, or if they need to self-isolate.

Organizational Operations

- Use telework or remote work options if available.
- Stagger shifts or offer flexible work hours and schedules. Prevent mixing of staff between shifts.
- Discourage people from congregating and limit the use of lunch and meeting rooms.
- Maximize fresh air exchange where possible and limit the use of ceiling or pedestal fans in common spaces. If fans are used, minimize air flow that directs current from one person directly towards another.

Additional resources

- Halton Region Public Health:
 - [Cleaning practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
 - [COVID-19 Public Health Guidelines: Public Washrooms](#)
- Government of Ontario
 - [Ontario Regulation 82/20](#): Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (Rules for areas in Stage 1).
 - [Ontario Regulation 11/21](#): Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (Stay-At-Home Order).
 - [COVID-19 Workplace Safety Plan Guidance](#)

For more information and updates, visit halton.ca/COVID19 or call 311.