

With an abundance of information on COVID-19 available from various sources, TeksMed is working to curate and provide you with information relevant to your business. Please read the following article outlining the precautions that should be practiced in the workplace. Source material cited below.

How businesses and employees can stay safe while operating during COVID-19

There have been outbreaks of COVID-19 in Canadian workplaces. As provinces and territories re-open their economies, we will continue to see the spread of COVID-19. Learn what you can do as an employer to avoid risks while protecting yourself, your family and your community.

This is not applicable to workplaces where health care is provided. First responders and health care workers should follow the occupational health and safety and infection prevention and control practices within their workplace.

- Communicate openly about COVID-19 and its impact on the workplace, employees and their families.
- Encourage employees to take care of their physical and mental health.
- Involve your occupational health and safety committee, if you have one, or representative to:
 - consider workplace risks
 - provide personal protective equipment (PPE) as needed
 - train employees in PPE use

Reducing risks in the workplace

Separating people from each other, reducing contact with shared surfaces and using physical barriers are more protective ways to mitigate risk. Less protective measures rely on individuals to consistently follow personal practices, such as:

- cleaning and disinfecting
- use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
- wearing non-medical masks or face coverings

In some settings, physical distancing or separation may not be possible. Use a "layered" approach, by combining multiple measures, to maximize safety and reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread.

The following examples of risk mitigation measures are not exhaustive. You are encouraged to find creative and adaptive ways to reduce risks in your workplace that align with public health advice and are respectful of workers.

Keep sick customers and employees out of the workplace

Clearly tell employees and customers that they shouldn't enter your workplace if they're not feeling well, even if their symptoms are mild.

- Post accessible signs or have someone at the entrance to remind people.
- Consider screening employees for signs of COVID-19 before they enter the workplace.
- Consider asking clients if they are ill or have symptoms of COVID-19 when making and confirming appointments.

Remind employees to monitor themselves for symptoms at work and at home.

- Require that employees stay at home if they're ill.
- They should only return to the workplace after isolation criteria have been met, in consultation with the local public health authority or healthcare provider.

Ensure that workers know what to do if they become ill at work.

Identify a space where a sick employee can isolate away from others until arrangements are made for them to go home.

- Plan for how they will get home without using public transit.

Adjust personal and sick leave policies so employees can:

- stay home when ill
- undergo COVID-19 testing
- quarantine (self-isolate)
- take care of children or someone who is ill
- take sick leave without obtaining a medical note

Redesign spaces and business models to promote physical distancing and limit contact

Some people may be more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 because their jobs require them to be in contact with large numbers of people. This increases their chances of being exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Maintaining at least a 2-metre distance from other people (physical distancing) is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness.

If possible, adopt contactless business models, such as:

- Serving customers over the phone or online.
- Offer curbside pickup, drive-through or delivery.

Consider work arrangements that reduce social contact, such as:

- telework
- flexible hours
- staggered start times
- more use of email and teleconferencing
- providing services outdoors

Help people practise physical distancing by:

- increasing the distance between people, such as lineups, restaurant tables, desks and workstations
- changing the flow of foot traffic, where possible, to encourage people to travel in one direction through the workplace
- using visual cues to encourage 2-metre distance (for example, accessible signage, floor markings)

Limit the number of in-person interactions your employees and customers can have with others in your workplace.

- Allow fewer workers and customers in your workplace at one time.
- Close or restrict access to non-essential common areas.

- Stagger work hours or work days to reduce number of contacts.

Identify a space where employees or clients can be isolated from others if they develop symptoms and are not able to leave the workplace.

Reduce the number of common surfaces that need to be touched. Examples include:

- propping doors open
- offering waste containers that don't need to be touched

Restrict access to non-essential shared equipment.

Offer contactless payment methods (minimize use of cash) if possible. The Bank of Canada advocates that retailers continue to accept cash to ensure Canadians have access to the goods and services they need. Refusing cash purchases outright will put an undue burden on those who depend on cash and have limited payment options. When cash is used for payment, use safe handling practices.

Use physical barriers between workers or customers (for example, cubicles or plexiglass screens).



Promote healthy practices

Promote and facilitate personal preventive practices. Everyone plays a part in making workplaces safer, including employers, employees, contractors, clients, and all others who interact with workplaces/businesses.

Tell staff and customers what you're doing to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace.

Post signs encouraging healthy practices, such as:

- hand hygiene
- coughing or sneezing into your arm or a tissue
- practising physical distancing

Ensure signage is appropriate for the reading level and language preferences of employees and clients.

Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol near high-traffic areas and frequently touched surfaces.

- Ensure accessibility for those with disabilities or other accommodation needs.

Keep all washrooms well stocked with:

- liquid soap
- paper towels or hand dryers

Encourage regular handwashing breaks.

Educate and train staff on preventing COVID-19.

Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering is recommended for employees, clients and customers when they can't consistently maintain a 2-metre distance from others.

- Consult with your occupational health and safety team and local public health authority before introducing mask-wearing policies to the workplace.

Identify shared surfaces and areas where people have frequent contact with others.

- Clean and disinfect these areas more often.

Discourage in-person group meetings and informal gatherings.

Promote increased cleaning and disinfecting of employees' work environments.

- Provide sanitizing wipes so employees can clean and disinfect their own workstations.

Support and encourage employees to take care of their mental health.

Consider having employees sign in and out so that they can be contacted in the event of a workplace exposure.

Keep emergency contact information for staff current.

Maintain a clean and safe workplace

Reduce risks from exposure to surfaces that are frequently touched by others by:

Establishing proper cleaning and disinfection protocols.

- Be aware of occupational health and safety requirements.
- Know the requirements under the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) about hazardous products in the workplace.

Clean and disinfect high-traffic work areas and frequently touched surfaces more often.

Clean and disinfect essential shared equipment before and after use.

Establishing a cleaning and disinfection protocol to be followed if an employee develops symptoms.

Using approved hard-surface disinfectants that have a drug identification number (DIN).

- A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms the product is approved for use in Canada.
- If an approved disinfectant isn't available due to supply issues, use a diluted bleach solution.

If available, choosing products that clean and disinfect all at once, such as wipes or commercial disinfectant solutions.

Keeping cleaning and disinfecting products available for staff to use.



Protecting mental health

Many workers have been affected by mental health issues as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's important to remember that mental health is just as important as physical health, and to take measures to support mental wellbeing. Here are some resources that can assist with maintaining mental health in the workplace during this time.

[Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety and Depression](#) (Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions) - Tips and resources on things we can do as individuals and collectively to deal with stress and support one another during these challenging times.

[Mental Health and Psychosocial Considerations During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (World Health Organization) – These mental health considerations were developed by the WHO's Department of Mental Health and Substance Use as messages targeting different groups to support for mental and psychosocial well-being during COVID-19 outbreak.

[Coronavirus: Managing Stress & Anxiety](#) (Canadian Mental Health Association, Kelowna) – Tips and information on how to reduce and manage anxiety in the workplace due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

[Maintaining Calm Energy for Our Children](#) (TeksMed Services Inc.) - Advice on how parents can navigate the current climate with their kids.

[Discussing the Unknown with Your Employees](#) (TeksMed Services Inc.) - Tips for how employers can discuss the unknown with their employees in a time when business is so uncertain.

[Dealing with Panic and Uncertainty](#) (TeksMed Services Inc.) - Useful ways to work with your feelings and why saying "don't panic" isn't the most supportive energy.

[Successfully Adapting to an Environment of Quarantine](#) (TeksMed Services Inc.) - In this free webinar, Dave Phillips, Chief Mental Health Officer for TeksMed, addresses six simple ways you can proactively safeguard your mental wellbeing during these difficult times.

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/measure-reduce-community/guidance-workplaces-covid-19.html>