

COVID-19 Public Health Principles for Public Spaces

October 27, 2020

This document will provide guiding principles that will help ensure public health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic for public spaces, including non-healthcare workplaces, businesses, or public gathering places.

Strategies can be adapted to meet the needs of different environments, but these principles should underlie all efforts and work.

Screen staff, volunteers, customers, clients, and visitors for COVID-19-like symptoms

- All staff and volunteers should complete a [health screening questionnaire](#) before each work shift. The questions can be completed on paper-based questionnaires or completed electronically.
- It is recommended, at a minimum, that signage be placed at the door informing customers, clients or visitors that they should only enter the public space if they do not have COVID-19-like symptoms. Customers, clients, or visitors may also be asked questions about their symptoms before entry, especially if a service is provided in a one-on-one or small group environment.
- Where service is provided in a one-on-one or small group environment, consider maintaining client logs that include contact information.

Review employee attendance policy

- Employers should ensure staff do not come to work if they are sick.
- Have a clear procedure in place to notify a supervisor if a staff member is sick.
- Consider not requiring sick notes for staff members who are sick.
- If employees become sick with COVID-19-like symptoms while at work, they should go home right away, self-isolate, and get tested at an Assessment Centre or speak with their primary care provider.
- Employees can use the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#), call their health care provider, or visit [an Assessment Centre](#) to see if they need testing.
- Establish criteria for returning to work. In general, employees who have had COVID-19 can return to work 10 days after their symptoms start. There are no tests of clearance that are required to return to work.
- Maintain flexible policies so employees can stay home to care for a sick family member, or if they must quarantine because they were in close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19.

Maximize physical distancing

- As much as possible, everyone should keep two metres/six feet from other staff members and customers.
- For staff members and volunteers:
 - Use telework or remote work options, if available.
 - Stagger shifts or offer flexible work hours and schedules.
 - Where shifts are established, attempt to not mix staff between shifts.
 - Discourage employees from congregating.
 - Ensure physical distancing while in lunch rooms and meeting rooms.
 - Limit use of meeting rooms to only those that can provide adequate distancing.

Maximize physical distancing (continued)

- For customers and clients:
 - Increase your online or phone services.
 - Plan for curb side delivery.

Modify the physical environment

- Consider installing plexiglass or other barriers where there will be close contact between staff and customers or clients.
- Remove surplus furniture and supplies from walkways to allow for ease of movement while maintaining physical distancing.
- Use tape or floor markings to help people maintain two metres/six feet between people.
- Manage checkout lines and maintain two metres/six feet distance between clients, customers and staff members.
- Use tap features at checkout instead of cash where possible.
- Implement a 'unidirectional' flow of traffic through the facility.

Keep hands clean

- Clean hands by washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based (at least 70% alcohol concentration) hand sanitizer.
- Washing with soap and water is preferred, if hands are visibly dirty.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at facility entrances and exits and anywhere payments are processed.
- If gloves are being used, place them in the garbage after removing them, then wash hands.
- Ensure adequate supplies of soap, paper towel, and hand sanitizer are maintained.

Cleaning and disinfectants

- Commonly-used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and common areas such as door handles, counters, cabinet doors, elevator buttons, light switches, faucets, toilet handles, handrails, touch screen surfaces and keypads.
- Soap, hand sanitizer and/or disinfectant wipes should be available in common areas. If wipes are not available, general disinfectants can be used.
- Only use disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) that confirms they are approved for use in Canada. Follow manufacturer's instructions and check the expiry date of products.

Non-medical masks

- Masks or face coverings are mandatory in all indoor public spaces and public transit (bus, taxi, ride share, etc.) in London and Middlesex County. Visit the MLHU website for more details <https://www.healthunit.com/face-masks>.
- Even when not mandated, it is strongly recommended that non-medical masks are worn by staff members, volunteers, contractors, customers, and clients when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Ensure that staff, volunteers, and contractors who are using masks have access to training on their proper use and how to put them on and take them off safely.
- Non-medical masks do not replace other important public health measures, such as hand hygiene, physical distancing, and screening for symptoms.
- Not everyone will be able to tolerate a mask; those who do not wear a mask should not be denied service.

Responding to a case of COVID-19 in a public space

- People who are diagnosed with COVID-19 are reported to public health by healthcare providers and laboratories. Public health will then investigate to determine if the person may have been exposed, or exposed others to the virus, while in a public space.
- Public health will advise a workplace or public space of any additional measures that are required to reduce the risk of transmission. This may include instructions for staff to self-isolate or self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms, and/or increase cleaning and disinfecting practices.
- Employers are only informed of a COVID-19 case if there is a public health need, such as the identification of close contacts in the workplace.

London Office

Suite 110, 355 Wellington St, London, ON N6A 3N7
tel: (519) 663-5317 • fax: (519) 663-9581

www.healthunit.com
health@mlhu.on.ca

Strathroy Office - Kenwick Mall

51 Front St. E., Strathroy ON N7G 1Y5
tel: (519) 245-3230 • fax: (519) 245-4772