



FACT SHEET

SOCIAL DISTANCING and SOCIAL ISOLATION FOR HOME & COMMUNITY GENERAL GUIDANCE

- On March 11, 2020 the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic
- This guidance document was developed in order to provide health care professionals and the public recommendations for how to manage and limit the spread of COVID-19 in their personal lives

General Recommendations

Everyone is encouraged to practice the following hygiene principles:

- Wash your hands frequently (for 20 seconds)
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (min. 60% alcohol content)
- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve or a tissue (wash clothes frequently)
- Stay at home when you are sick
- Disinfect spaces regularly, and pay attention to high-touch surfaces (such as printers, desks, phones, kitchen appliances, door handles, etc.)

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing), self-isolate. Self-assessment guidance for what to do is available on the Ministry of Health [website](#). The self-assessment will direct you to Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000), your family physician, nurse practitioner, family practice clinic, or your [local public health unit](#).

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Surfaces

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. If reusable gloves are used, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other purposes. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection products used. [Clean hands](#) immediately after gloves are removed.
- If surfaces are visibly dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectants should be effective.

- Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
 - Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
 - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
- [Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims](#) are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
 - Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely, or
Use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims (examples at [this link](#)) that are suitable for porous surfaces.

Clothing, towels, linens and other items that go in the laundry

- Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from an ill person and then discard after each use. If using reusable gloves, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other household purposes. [Clean hands](#) immediately after gloves are removed.
 - If no gloves are used when handling dirty laundry, be sure to wash hands afterwards.
 - If possible, do not shake dirty laundry. This will minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
 - Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry from an ill person can be washed with other people’s items.
 - Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces. If possible, consider placing a bag liner that is either disposable (can be thrown away) or can be laundered.

From the CDC’s document on [“Clean & Disinfect”](#)

Health Care Providers-Interaction with loved ones

Preventing transmission:

- Remove clothing and items that were used in the workplace and launder as soon as possible, store those dirty items in a separate location from those of loved ones. Consider this location to be contaminated and do not re-use with clean laundry.
- Wash your hands immediately upon entry to the home. Continue to maintain regular hand hygiene.

- Disinfect surfaces of items that are shared (car surfaces, keys, electronic devices).
- Ensure that all food utensils, plates, cups, etc are cleaned and disinfected, limit sharing.
- Isolate yourself if you begin to exhibit COVID-19 symptoms.

Caring for Children

Preventing transmission:

- It is important to reinforce "no food sharing" policies in social and childcare settings
- To prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, water bottles used by sports teams should not be shared among the team players.
- Mouthpieces on musical instruments, especially on those used by more than one child, should be cleaned and disinfected as per standard practices recommended for the instrument. When feasible, children should have their own mouthpieces.
- Limit social activities that could increase transmission through sharing items and close contact
- Encourage social interaction through virtual channels

Maintain cleaning and disinfecting policies

- Increased monitoring of hand cleaning supplies is also recommended to ensure all sinks in washrooms, kitchens and classrooms are well stocked with hand washing supplies at all times (i.e., soap and paper towels).
- It is recommended that childcare programs and homes have toys that are easily cleaned and disinfected (e.g., avoid plush toys).
- It may be prudent to increase the frequency of the cleaning schedule for these items, especially when illness is circulating in the setting or the local community or if symptomatic children have been sharing or playing with the toys.

High-Touch Surfaces:

- It is recommended that high-touch objects and surfaces (e.g. water fountain knobs and push buttons, doorknobs, faucet handles, toys, electronic devices, bannisters/stair rails) in childcare centres and homes are cleaned and disinfected regularly and appropriate procedures are set up for waste handling.

Adapted from PHAC's document on "[Public health guidance for schools\(K-12\) and childcare programs \(COVID-19\)](#)"

High Risk Individuals (Immunocompromised, Chronic Medical Conditions & Elderly)

- Have supplies on hand
 - Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications to have on hand in case there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community and you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time
 - If you cannot get extra medications, consider asking your pharmacy for medications to be delivered
 - Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home

- Have enough household items and groceries on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for a period of time.
- Take everyday precautions
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick
 - Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick
 - Avoid all non-essential travel including plane trips, and especially avoid embarking on [cruise ships](#).
- If COVID-19 is spreading in your community, take extra measures to put distance between yourself and other people to further reduce your risk of being exposed to this new virus.
 - Stay home as much as possible.
 - Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks
- Have a plan for if you get sick:
 - **Consult with your health care provider for more information about** monitoring your health for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
 - Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
 - Determine who can provide you with care if your caregiver gets sick

Adapted from the CDC's document on "[People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19](#)"

Meetings and Social Gatherings

Limit face-to-face meetings and gatherings. Virtual meetings and gatherings are recommended.

If in-person meetings must take place, guests/invitees who have traveled outside of Canada within the last 14 days should be advised of self-isolation and offered virtual participation options if possible. In person meetings should screen at door for symptoms. Individuals who preform screening should be adequately protected.

It is important to acknowledge that social distancing can take a toll on your mental health. Suggestions for minimizing this impact can be found at: <https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/social-distancing>

If you are struggling with your mental health, consider reaching out for assistance. ConnexOntario is available 24-7: 1-866-531-2600 or <https://www.connexontario.ca/> Connex is funded by the Government of Ontario and provides free and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness and/or gambling.

Travel

It is recommended that you refrain from travel.

If travel is considered essential:

Prior to Travel

There are several active travel health notices for COVID-19. Before you leave check the [Government of Canada's Travel advice page](#).

During your return to Canada

If you develop symptoms of coronavirus before you leave, do **not** get on board any form of public transportation. Seek medical attention.

If you experience symptoms of COVID-19 during a flight, tell the flight attendant before you land or the border services officer as you enter the country. They will notify a quarantine officer who will assess your symptoms.

If you do not have symptoms but believe you were exposed to a source of COVID-19, report this information to a Canada border services agent on arrival in Canada.

During the 14 days after your return

While the recommendation as of March 14, 2020 is to self-quarantine only if you have visited a high-risk country, it is recommended that you consider self-quarantine for 14 days on return after any out-of-country travel due to the high number of impacted countries across the world.

At a minimum, if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, isolate yourself at home as quickly as possible and contact Telehealth or consult the Ministry of Health [website](#). Describe your symptoms and document your travel history.

Adapted from Health Canada's document on "[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel advice](#)"