

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR INDOOR AND OUTDOOR EVENTS & GATHERINGS

This guidance document provides recommendations to help stop the spread of COVID-19 when organizing and attending an indoor or outdoor event or gathering. For additional information to assist in considering risks associated with attending a gathering or event, review the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Risk mitigation tool for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

An event or gathering is any occasion that involves a number of people in proximity to each other for an extended period of time. This includes weddings, receptions, concerts, festivals, conferences, and cultural and sporting events. The level of risk depends on several factors, including the number of people, participants' health, the environment (e.g. indoors vs outdoors, ventilation), and activities being undertaken. Events or gatherings can contribute to the transmission of infections, including COVID-19. The potential risks for transmission include increased crowds, limited physical distancing, and restricted points of access/exit which force participants through high touch areas (e.g. doors, elevators).

The [Province of Ontario has put in place limits for indoor and outdoor organized public events and social gatherings](#) as follows:

- Indoor organized public events and social gatherings are limited to 50 people, including private dwellings
- Outdoor organized public events and social gatherings are limited to 100 people, including private dwellings

An indoor event or gathering **cannot** be combined with an outdoor event or gathering so as to increase the applicable limit on the number of people at the event or gathering.

People at their place of work, including performers and crews, **do not** count towards gathering limits.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZERS

- Consider canceling or postponing all non-essential public events (e.g. meetings, dinners, communal services), particularly if they include people who are more vulnerable to the virus, such as the elderly or those who are immune-compromised.
- Plan events outdoors whenever possible. Outdoor gatherings provide greater opportunity for physical distancing and continue to provide the safest means of socializing.
- Reduce the number of attendees or change the venue to prevent crowding.
- Plan to accommodate physical distancing by maintaining a minimum of 2 metres (6 feet) distance between participants from different social circles (e.g. taping off chairs, staggering tables).
- Face coverings are mandatory in all indoor public spaces and recommended outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge.
- Advise employees, volunteers and attendees not to attend if experiencing [symptoms](#) (i.e. fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose) or have come into contact with someone who has shown symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19.
- Stagger arrivals and departures.
- Provide pre-packaged refreshments.
- Post [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) posters in high traffic area and encourage all attendees to wash their hands with soap and water or sanitize their hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol-based) as they arrive.
- Increase access to handwashing and hand sanitizing stations.
- Promote personal protective practices (e.g. face coverings, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill).
- Follow [Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms](#) for important information about requirements for safety and cleaning precautions.
- Offer virtual or live-streamed activities.
- Eliminate high risk activities such as those that may result in physical contact between attendees outside of a social circle.

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR INDOOR AND OUTDOOR EVENTS & GATHERINGS

- Provide sufficient numbers of garbage receptacles for attendees to dispose of used sanitizing wipes, masks, gloves, and other waste properly.
- Dancing is not permitted
- If meal service is provided follow these [best practices for food safety](#) and these [guidelines for food service](#).

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTENDEES

- Do not attend events when you are sick. Stay home, and seek medical care if needed.
- At the event, maintain a 2 metre (6 feet) distance from others not in your social circle or immediate household.
- Ensure you wash your hands frequently with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wear a mandatory face covering in all indoor public spaces and also wear a face covering outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge.

## OUTDOOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS

- Maximum 100 people permitted (not including staff).
- If using a tent or covering with three or more sides/walls; refer to indoor requirements.
- Be aware of the potential for inclement weather and develop a plan to accommodate attendees if severe weather suddenly arises (e.g. plan for a safe indoor space while ensuring physical distancing and provide face coverings for all attendees, or cancelling the gathering/event if inclement weather is predicted or if the attendees cannot be safely moved indoors).

## INDOOR ORGANIZED PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS

- Maximum of 50 people for the entire facility (not including staff).
- The only time there is an exception to this indoor capacity limit is for the purposes of a wedding, a funeral or a religious service, rite or ceremony, if the gathering is held in a building or structure other than a private dwelling. For these specific events, the following applies in accordance with [O. Reg 364/20](#):
  - The number of persons occupying any room in the building or structure while attending the gathering must not exceed 30 per cent of the capacity of the particular room.
  - All persons attending the gathering must comply with public health guidance on physical distancing.
  - Once the service is over, the 50 person maximum will then apply to any dinner or reception that follows.
- Face coverings are required by attendees and staff for all public indoor organized events and social gatherings.
  - Face coverings may be removed once seated at a table for eating and drinking.
  - Officiant can choose not to wear a face covering while speaking, and 4 metre separation between other people attending is adhered to.

## PUBLIC EVENTS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS THAT SERVE FOOD

All special events that serve food require approval from the SMDHU. For more information regarding special events and applicable application forms please visit <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/FoodSafety/SpecialEvents>

**Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR INDOOR AND OUTDOOR EVENTS & GATHERINGS

## REFERENCES

- Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020). *Risk mitigation tool for gatherings and events operating during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/mass-gatherings-risk-assesment.html#a2>
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. (2020). *Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms*. Retrieved from: [http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/public-washrooms-guidance-document\\_aoda-web.pdf?sfvrsn=0](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/public-washrooms-guidance-document_aoda-web.pdf?sfvrsn=0)