

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Last revised: May 2, 2022

The province has gradually eased COVID-19 related public health and workplace safety measures. The majority of COVID-19 related measures were lifted on March 1, with masking requirements removed in **most** places and all other regulatory requirements for businesses (including safety plans and passive screening) ending on March 21, 2022.

The easing of public health measures does not mean that the COVID-19 pandemic is over or that the risk of infection has been eliminated. COVID-19 continues to spread in our communities and caution remains essential. Businesses and organizations are encouraged to review their own procedures and take the necessary steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection in their business for patrons and staff.

USE OF MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS

- Mandatory mask requirements have been lifted in most settings. **Masks continue to be required for a number of settings**, including public transit, long-term care, retirement homes and other health-care settings, congregate care and living settings, shelters and jails. Masking requirements in these settings remain in place under the [Section 22 Class Order issued by Ontario's chief medical officer of health](#).
- Every person indoors in a setting where wearing a mask/face covering continues to be required must do so in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin.
- Masks or face coverings can only be removed temporarily indoors for the settings noted above:
 - to receive services that require the removal of their mask or face covering,
 - to engage in an athletic or fitness activity,
 - to eat and drink, or
 - for health and safety reasons.
- Masks are still *required* in the following situations regardless of setting:
 - Individuals who have COVID-19 should wear a mask on days 6-10 following a five-day isolation period.
 - Individuals who are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask and maintain as much distance as possible from others for 10 days after exposure.
 - Individuals who are returning from outside of the Canada should wear a mask for 14 days upon their return.
- Given the ongoing level of transmission of COVID in our communities, it is **strongly advised** that individuals continue to wear a [well-fitted](#) high quality 3-layered non-medical mask, medical mask or respirator (i.e., N95s, KN95) in indoor public places to protect against viral spread and severe illness. As such, we ask that businesses/organizations continue to support those patrons, staff and/or volunteers who choose to wear a mask for their protection and the protection of others.
- Businesses and other settings may voluntarily continue to require masks be worn indoors. Should your business or organization choose to continue the mask requirement within your business/organization, SMDHU encourages you to consult with legal representation.

SCREENING

- It is recommended that staff and individuals [screen themselves](#) prior to entering the business/organization and follow the direction provided.
- Passive screening signage can be posted to inform individuals on how to screen themselves for COVID-19 prior to entering the premises. Sample signage can be found on the health unit's [website](#).
- Businesses and organizations that wish to screen workers and employees may refer to the online [COVID-19 Screening Tool for Businesses and Organizations \(Screening Workers\)](#).

HAND HYGIENE AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- Glove use does not replace handwashing. Ensure hands are washed before and after handling food, after handling dirty utensils, using the bathroom, handling cash, etc. Gloves are to be replaced/changed at this time as well.

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- It is recommended that alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content be available at entrances and exits.
- Encourage all visitors to wash or sanitize their hands often using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially as they enter the premise.
- It is recommended that handwashing, hand sanitizing and [cover your cough](#) posters be posted in areas that can be clearly seen. Sample signage can be found [here](#).
- Where possible, it is advised to open windows and keep doors open to increase air flow.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine daily cleaning and disinfection, surfaces that are frequently touched with hands should be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition, as well as when visibly dirty.
 - Examples of frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, equipment, washrooms, locker rooms, change rooms, showers door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, sneeze guards, taps, utensils and dispensers, credit card machines, baby change tables, shopping carts/baskets, elevators and surfaces frequently touched in business vehicles.
- Dining tables must be cleaned and disinfected as frequently as necessary to maintain a sanitary condition **and** between sittings.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#).
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection including for COVID-19 is provided by [Health Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).
- While the risk of COVID-19 transmission through touching surfaces is low, it does occur. It is important to continue to follow infection control measures to reduce the various ways in which COVID-19 is spread. This includes appropriate cleaning and disinfection as well as proper hand hygiene, masking, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette and immunization.

SPACES WITH HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC) SYSTEMS

HVACs and their filters reduce the amount of virus particles in the air. HVAC filtration can reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission indoors when used with other public health measures such as physical distancing and wearing masks or face coverings. Ensure HVAC systems are in good working condition and regularly inspected. For improved ventilation the following measures are recommended:

- Increase air-exchange settings on the HVAC system, if possible.
- Use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system(s).
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
- Arrange furniture away from air vents and high airflow areas.
- Avoid re-circulating air.

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus can be transmitted through the air over long distances or through air ducts.

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITY

We understand that this is a challenging time, but public health measures like this are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19. We thank you for the service that you provide to the community.

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

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