

PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR USE OF PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Last revised: March 1, 2022

Public washrooms are important facilities in our communities as spaces that are used by the public. Depending on where they are located, they can be visited by many people and contaminated by visitors. To minimize the risk of contracting COVID-19 and other infectious diseases when using public washrooms, preventative measures are needed for these facilities.

COVID-19 can spread when people are in close proximity to one another (less than 2 metres or 6 feet) through the spread of respiratory droplets and aerosols or through contact with frequently touched surfaces. Since our hands serve as the vehicles for spreading COVID-19 through touching contaminated surfaces or items, handwashing is one of the most important actions one can take to reduce the virus' spread. The benefits of accessing a public washroom to wash hands far outweigh the potential risks of these facilities. Therefore, it is recommended that public washrooms be open where the following preventative measures can be implemented:

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Post [physical distancing](#) signs outside and inside the washroom in case of lineups.
- Persons waiting in line or congregating outside (e.g., to enter/exit the washroom, wash hands etc.) must maintain 2 metres (6 feet) distance from every other person.
- Install floor markers to designate 2 metres (6 feet) spacing where a line-up may occur to maintain physical distancing.
- Post maximum occupancy signs to further enhance [physical distancing](#).
- Some urinals and sink basins may need to be decommissioned (taped off) if 2 metres (6 feet) spacing cannot be maintained in the current setup.

USE OF MASKS OR FACE COVERINGS

- Every person indoors must wear a mask or [face covering](#) unless exemptions apply as per [The Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act](#) and associated regulations.
- Post [signs](#) outside of public washrooms that remind people to wear a mask or face covering.
- Masks or face coverings are recommended outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge.

HAND HYGIENE

- Post [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) signs at sinks.
- Ensure that [alcohol-based hand sanitizer](#) containing 60-90% alcohol content is made readily available at the entrance/exit of the washroom.
- Ensure that soap and paper towels are always available and are refilled frequently to ensure the public can practise proper hand hygiene.
- Paper towels are preferred in public washrooms during COVID-19.
- Hands-free sinks and paper towel dispensers are preferred to avoid the use of handles, which reduces high touched surfaces in washrooms. If hands-free appliances cannot be installed, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is required.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

- In addition to routine 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 touches surfaces include, but are not limited to hand contact areas, door handles, switches, tabletops, chairs, taps, and baby change tables.
- Use only disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) given and [approved by Health Canada](#). Ensure products are not expired and always follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- More guidance on cleaning and disinfection is provided by [Health Canada](#) and [Public Health Ontario](#).

ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS

- Ventilation in the facility should be maximized either by having the windows open or equipping the facility with a proper ventilation system.

GUIDANCE FOR PORTABLE TOILETS

- Post signage on [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) at sinks.
- Increase service intervals.
- To ensure [physical distancing](#), the number of portable toilets may need to be increased.
- Operators should ensure a supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content is available and frequently refilled.

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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RESOURCES

National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. (2020). COVID-19 and outdoor safety: Considerations for use of outdoor recreational spaces. Retrieved from <https://ncceh.ca/documents/guide/covid-19-and-outdoor-safety-considerations-use-outdoor-recreational-spaces>

Public Health Ontario. (2021). *Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings*. Retrieved from <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>

Public Health Agency of Canada. (2020). Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces.html>