

PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR USE OF PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Last revised: April 08, 2021

Public washrooms are important facilities in our communities as spaces that are permitted for use by the public. Depending on where they are located, they can be busy. Therefore, precautions are needed given the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 transmission can occur when people are within close proximity to one another through the spread of droplets or through shared contact with surfaces. The COVID-19 virus has also been found in feces. As a result, some changes in practice and equipment may be necessary. As one of the most important actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is handwashing, the benefits of accessing a washroom to facilitate this action far outweigh the potential risks. As a result, it is recommended that washrooms be open where the following protective measures can be put in place:

SUPPORT PROPER HAND HYGIENE

- Post signage on [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) at sinks.
- Ensure that soap and paper towels are always available and are refilled frequently to ensure the public can practice 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 touch surfaces in washrooms. If hands-free appliances cannot be installed, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is required.
- Recommend hand sanitizer containing 60-90% alcohol content be made readily available at the entrance/exit of the washroom.

SUPPORT PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- Post [physical distancing signage](#) 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 **and** wear a mask or face covering.
- Install floor markers to designate 2 metre (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 metre (6 feet) spacing cannot be maintained in the current set up.

MASKS OR FACE COVERINGS

- Every person indoors shall 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 face covering.
- Masks or face coverings are recommended outdoors when physical distancing is a challenge and are required when waiting in line or congregating outside (e.g. to enter/exit the washroom, wash hands etc.).
- Please see the [letter of instruction](#) for businesses and organizations posted to SMDHU's website for more information.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

- Place signage in each stall instructing users to flush the toilet with the lid down, if applicable.
- Ventilation in the facility should be maximized.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION OF THE FACILITY

- Frequent [cleaning \(including garbage\) and disinfection](#) should take place, especially in commonly touched areas/surfaces. The frequency of the cleaning and disinfection is dependent on the use of the facility.
- Refer to [Health Canada's lists of disinfectants](#) for use against COVID-19.
- Baby change tables may be used and will require frequent cleaning and disinfection.

PORTABLE TOILETS

- Post signage on [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) at sinks.
- Post physical distancing signage outside the portable toilet in case of lineups.
- Post [signs](#) outside portable toilets that remind people to wear a face covering.
- 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.

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.

RESOURCES

[COVID-19 and outdoor safety: Considerations for use of outdoor recreational spaces](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

[Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\) Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces](#)