

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

Overview

Good public health practices can minimize transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza and common colds. These practices include: proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting and staying home when sick.

This document has been developed to support business/entity operators or organizers in reducing the risk of transmission of infections among attendees (workers, patrons and the general public) by providing options to integrate good public health practices into normal operations. The strategies included are built on lessons learned and strategies that were successful throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Since each workplace is different, it is up to individual operators and organizers to determine which strategies, or combinations of strategies, are most appropriate in their facility or for their activity.

Businesses and entities are encouraged to promote COVID-19 vaccination to staff, volunteers and attendees and other eligible persons as part of their public health strategy.

All Albertans are required to follow all applicable Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) orders.

Risk Mitigation

General Guidance

- Operators must conduct a workplace hazard assessment, and develop and implement safe workplace practices to protect against the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections.
 - Employers should refer to OHS and Alberta Labour for requirements and guidance on hazard assessment and risk mitigation plans.
 - All employers are expected to maintain and reinforce all safe workplace practices and to implement measures to control and mitigate workplace hazards.
- Operators are strongly encouraged to adopt best practices for infection prevention as part of their normal operating procedures. See the Infection Prevention Best Practices section below for more information on these measures:
 - supporting staff to stay home when they are sick;
 - providing information on vaccines, and their role in workplace health and safety;
 - encouraging frequent hand hygiene and making hand sanitizer available throughout the workplace;
 - encouraging attendees to follow respiratory etiquette; and
 - frequent cleaning and disinfecting.

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators should assess the role of face masks in their work place; if a staff member or client chooses to wear a face mask, operators should support this practice. • Operators are encouraged to increase staff awareness about the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and their role, such as posting signage around the workplace and providing basic training for staff. • Risk of COVID-19 spread increases in crowded settings, indoor locations, and enclosed spaces with poor ventilation. These risks may be reduced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ hosting activities outside or in other well-ventilated areas; or ○ improving ventilation by opening doors and windows. • Other measures that will provide additional protection, especially when working with high-risk populations, unvaccinated individuals, or indoor settings where people gather in close proximity, include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementing measures to limit the total number of people present in a small indoor space, or maintaining spacing between people who are in close proximity; ○ Alternative methods of service delivery (e.g., online, by telephone, or contact-free). • For more information, see the Additional Measures section below.
--	--

INFECTION PREVENTION BEST PRACTICES

Immunization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 vaccines help prevent people from getting infected and protect them from getting severely sick if they do become ill. • Where vaccines are available (e.g., for COVID-19 or the flu), it is strongly recommended that all eligible individuals be immunized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vaccines are not provincially mandatory in Alberta and an employee's health information is private. • Employers wishing to require that employees be vaccinated as a condition of employment are encouraged to seek legal guidance in implementing this policy. • In settings where vaccination may be low (i.e., workers voluntarily disclosing their vaccine status), operators may want to increase the other measures they put in place.
Isolation and Quarantine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isolating and quarantining help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reducing the number of people who could be infected by a sick person. • Albertans with core COVID-19 symptoms remain legally required to isolate for 10 days.

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 are legally required to self-isolate for 10 days.• Albertans who have had close contact with someone with COVID-19 are legally required to quarantine, as outlined by CMOH Orders.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Note: Albertans who are partially or fully vaccinated have different quarantine requirements.• Businesses and individuals should monitor and adhere to the federal quarantine requirements for travellers.• Operators are encouraged to ensure that there are no disincentives for workers or volunteers to stay home while sick, isolating or quarantining.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Isolation is a mandatory requirement (see section below).• Operators may consider providing:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flexible work-at-home arrangements;○ Unpaid leave regardless of length of service, to be used when staff are sick;○ Clarity around company policy defining when ill staff are expected to stay at home.
Spacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The requirement to remain 2m physically distanced is no longer legally mandatory.• Respiratory infections tend to spread rapidly in enclosed, small spaces with a large number of people; increasing space between people reduces the risk of transmission.• Operators may consider options to increase spacing between workers, patrons and members of the public, such as:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Arranging seating/tables/countertops/work stations/beds to allow spacing between attendees.○ Allowing space between seating or workspaces; consider capacity limit for the venue.○ Reducing the number of attendees in a location at one time through capacity limits or staggered scheduling.○ Directing traffic flow using signs, ropes, floor decals, etc.○ Using reservations and staggering entry times to avoid people lingering or waiting in lines.○ Encouraging staff to check in on other's comfort level and increasing spacing where requested.○ Providing dedicated entry and exit points.○ Provide different sections of seating where individuals must be spaced out for attendees who wish to stay distanced.

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting frequent and proper hand hygiene for all attendees can help reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading through contact with surfaces and with other people. Operators can encourage hand hygiene by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Providing hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.○ Posting signs.• Operators are encouraged to promote respiratory etiquette (e.g., coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow, promptly disposing of used tissues in a lined garbage bin).
Cleaning and Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operators are encouraged to develop and implement procedures for cleaning and disinfecting of facilities including high traffic areas, common areas, public washrooms and showering facilities.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Items that are loaned, rented, or made freely available for use by multiple individuals, such as shopping carts and baskets, wheelchairs, and pushcarts, should be regularly cleaned and disinfected.• Operators are encouraged to use cleaning and disinfection products according to the directions on the label.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Use disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN) issued by Health Canada.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES

Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operators are not required to provide regular testing for COVID-19 or other respiratory infections; if an operator feels that testing is necessary, they should follow the Guidance for Employer-Initiated COVID-19 Testing.
Safer Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternatives to in-person interactions, particularly until all Albertans have had the opportunity to receive the protection of a second dose of vaccine, can be considered based on the risk profile of staff and/or clients.• Offering virtual or outdoor options for meetings, gatherings, work and service delivery reduces opportunities for spread of infection, since there are fewer in-person interactions and less build up of respiratory particles compared to indoor, in-person settings.• Examples of alternative operational practices include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ curbside pick up or contactless delivery.○ drive-in or drive-through services.○ work-from-home arrangements○ online and teleconferencing options to staff.○ hosting activities virtually or outdoors.

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical barriers remain an effective means of reducing transmission.• Operators who wish to continue using barriers should consider:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Barriers are effective for separating individuals in close proximity or are near each other for long periods (e.g., between booths at a restaurant, or a cashier and shopper at the point of purchase).○ To be effective, barriers should be impermeable, and wide/tall enough to fully separate the individuals.
Personal Protective Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operators are encouraged to examine the need for specific types of PPE as part of their workplace safety and hazard assessment.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Operators can use OHS's Respiratory Protective Equipment: An Employer's Guide to determine if PPE is required for certain activities in their facilities.• Operators and organizers should be aware of any municipal bylaws on masking, and can also implement their own masking requirements for their workplace or venue.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Provincial masking requirements are in place for specific settings including Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health facilities, continuing care, public transit, taxis and commercial ride-shares.• Operators and organizers should support attendees in their choice to wear a mask where it doesn't inhibit the activities being done.• Individuals should consider their own risk of acquiring COVID-19 and make decisions on wearing a non-medical mask in public places. For more information visit alberta.ca/masks.• Operators should have a plan to respond to staff or clients if they are exhibiting symptoms of a respiratory disease at the workplace as isolation is still required for those with COVID-19 symptoms. This plan may include providing individuals with a mask for use during transportation home.
Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proper ventilation is an effective measure to reduce the concentration of airborne contaminants, including airborne disease, in indoor locations. It does this by increasing the rate of air change, reducing recirculation of air and increasing the use of outdoor air.• Operators are encouraged to ensure ventilation systems are well maintained and functioning optimally.• The variety and complexity of HVAC systems in large buildings requires professional interpretation of technical guidelines and codes.

This document and the recommendations within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed.

Last Revised: July 2021