

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 advice included is built on lessons learned and strategies that were successful throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Since each setting 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

- COVID-19 and other respiratory infections are workplace hazards.
- 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.
 - All Albertans must isolate if they have COVID-19 symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, runny nose or sore throat ([CMOH Order 39-2021](#));
 - 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

View the current version of this publication at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/general-guidance-for-covid-19-and-other-respiratory-illnesses>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators must follow provincial requirements for face masks, and should be aware of federal and local requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whenever possible, staff should be supported to wear face masks in the workplace. • 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. • The risk of transmission 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; ○ improving ventilation by opening doors and windows; and/or ○ ensuring HVAC systems (if present) are operational and maintained according to manufacturer guidelines. • 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

<p>Vaccination</p>	<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 influenza), it is strongly recommended that all eligible individuals be immunized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vaccines are not provincially mandatory in Alberta. • Employers wishing to require that employees be vaccinated as a condition of employment are encouraged to seek legal guidance in implementing this policy. •
<p>Isolation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albertans with core COVID-19 symptoms are legally required to isolate for 10 days. • Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 are legally required to self-isolate for 10 days.

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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"> • 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. • Maintaining distance between individuals helps prevent the spread of disease (e.g., 2 metres). 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 work spaces; consider capacity limit for the venue. ○ Reducing the number of attendees in a location at one time through capacity limits or staggered scheduling (e.g., use reservations and staggered entry times to avoid people lingering or waiting in lines). ○ Directing traffic flow using signs, ropes, floor decals, etc., and providing dedicated entry and exit points. ○ Implementing practices and/or encouraging staff and attendees to respect an individual's need for personal space. ○ Providing space to enable people to stay physically distanced.
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 hand washing 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).

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

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. See the COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities for more information.
----------------------------------	--

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"> • 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"> ○ curb-side pick up or contactless delivery ○ drive-in or drive-through services ○ work-from-home arrangements ○ online and videoconferencing or teleconferencing options to staff. • Individuals should be supported in assessing their own risk of acquiring COVID-19, and, wherever possible, in taking precautions they feel would be useful to their situation.
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 who are in close proximity or near each other for long periods of time (e.g., between booths at a restaurant, or a cashier and shopper at the point of purchase).

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ To be effective, barriers should be impermeable, and wide/tall enough to fully separate the individuals.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<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 must follow provincial requirements regarding face masks.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Operators and organizers should be aware of any local or federal requirements for face 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: September 2021