

Living Well Alongside COVID-19 for Businesses and Organizations

Although the COVID-19 situation is improving, COVID-19 is still circulating in the community with both hospitalizations and deaths occurring in our most vulnerable populations.

With the lifting of provincially required measures, organizations and businesses have an opportunity to determine their own workplace policies. These policies will create an environment where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is low for employees and members of the public; having a policy also helps to maintain business continuity.

The province has provided information and a tool to guide the development of a workplace safety plan/risk assessment, it can be found in the follow link - [Guide to developing your COVID-19 workplace safety plan | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca).

Tips for Businesses and Organizations to support “Living Well alongside COVID-19”

- Encourage and support management and employees to be mentally and physically healthy by:
 - » eating well, being physically active, getting enough sleep, connecting with and supporting others to help cope with stress and build resiliency.

Suggestions to Create a Healthy Supportive Workplace Environment

- Continue to follow “COVID Etiquette” – cover sneezes and coughs, keep distance between people, regular hands washing/use hand sanitizer, follow workplace policies, respect people’s choice to wear a mask.
- Have a COVID-19 screening policy for employees before they come to work using [the provincial screening tool](#) and consider having a process in place to support individuals who have COVID-19 symptoms to stay home when sick such as:
 - » paid sick days
 - » system for workers to contact the workplace when sick
 - » helping workers to identify close contacts in the workplace. Following [Case and Contact Tracing - Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit guidance](#).
- Have a [Vaccine Policy](#) that recommends employees are up to date with COVID-19 vaccines.
- Consider having employees wear a well fitted medical/N95 mask for additional [personal protection and to reduce transmission](#) when they are away from their personal work station or interacting with the public who may be unmasked and where physical distance cannot be maintained.
- Reduce opportunities for close contact:
 - » review [Close Contact at Work](#)
 - » maintain impermeable barriers such as Plexiglas at high traffic areas e.g. reception areas, cash registers, etc.
 - » set up work stations so employees are 2 m distance from each other or add impermeable barriers if 2 m cannot be achieved
 - » encourage physical distancing in the workplace or public area through visual cues including signage and using reminder stickers on the floor.

- Maintain hand sanitizer in public areas.
- Continue a high standard of cleaning for surfaces that are frequently touched. Cleaning frequency is based on use.
- Increase ventilation by opening a window, maintain your HVAC system, consider installing HEPA filters appropriately sized for your space.
- Set up a safe space for workers to have lunch and breaks:
 - » schedule breaks to reduce the number of people eating together
 - » offer ideas for where lunches and breaks can be enjoyed safely
 - » offer healthy options for staff when providing food (e.g., water, fruit and vegetables)
 - » provide opportunities for activity breaks (e.g., taking a walk outdoors).

Hosting a meeting or event - Consider the following public health measures:

- Use a large room with plenty of space for participants to spread out and consider events outdoors where possible.
- Encourage physical distancing.
- In the meeting or event invitation ask people:
 - » to check for symptoms before they come
 - » to wear a mask if they wish
 - » encourage people to be up to date with COVID vaccines.
- Encourage an atmosphere of respect for a person's choice to wear a mask or not.
- Maintain impermeable barriers such as Plexiglas at high traffic areas e.g. reception areas, cash registers, ticket booths etc.
- Post a sign with COVID-19 symptoms at the entrance and ask people not to enter if they have a symptom(s).
- Use a hybrid meeting model of video conferencing and in-person attendance to help reduce crowding.
- Select a location where the ventilation system has been properly maintained with HEPA filters and where windows can be opened.
- Provide a microphone for those who are speaking.
- Spread out food and beverage tables and other places where people might gather.
- Encourage attendees to remain seated while eating or drinking.
- Have hand sanitizer readily available.