

COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms

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For updated information about COVID-19, visit hpePublicHealth.ca.

COVID-19 is most commonly spread person-to-person, from an infected person through:

- respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes;
- close personal contact, such as being within 2 metres (6 feet) for 15 minutes or longer; and
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

There is evidence to suggest that in the right conditions, COVID-19 could remain viable on surfaces from several hours up to 3 days, depending on the surface material.

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 outweighs the potential risks. As a result, it is recommend that washrooms be opened 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. Though no studies have pointed to COVID-19 being transmitted through electric air dryers, some studies show that air dryers can spread bacteria.
- 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.
- Hand sanitizer should be made available where possible at the entrance/exit of the washroom.

Support Physical Distancing

- Post physical distancing signage outside and inside the washroom in case of lineups.
- Floor markers to designate 2 metres (6 foot) spacing may be advisable in busier washrooms.
- 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) of space cannot be maintained in the current set up.

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 Disinfecting the Facility

- Frequent cleaning and disinfection (including garbage removal) should take place, especially common contact surfaces/areas (e.g. door handles, faucets, counters). Facilities must be cleaned and disinfected as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.
- Baby change tables may be used and will require cleaning and disinfection as frequently as is necessary to maintain a sanitary condition.

Portable Toilets

- Post signage on [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) at sinks.
- Post [physical distancing](#) signage outside the portable toilet in case of lineups.
- Increase cleaning protocols and service intervals.
- To ensure physical distancing, the number of portable toilets may need to be increased.
- Operators should ensure hand sanitizer is available and frequently refilled.

Compliance and Enforcement

Non-compliance with these requirements may result in warnings, charges and fines under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#). Penalties may be up to \$100,000 per person (per day), one year in jail, up to \$500,000 for the officer or director of a corporation, or up to \$10,000,000 for a corporation.

Resources

- [COVID-19 and outdoor safety: Considerations for use of outdoor recreational spaces](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\) Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces](#)