



Introduction

COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets and aerosols, contaminated surfaces, and during close or direct contact with people who are sick. Multiple hazard control measures (physical distancing, wearing face masks, frequent hand hygiene, good respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfection) should be used in a **layered approach** to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In all cases, guidance from local [public health authorities](#) and your [jurisdictional Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) regulator](#) must be followed.

Physical distancing is one control measure that can reduce the risk of spreading the virus, by changing the way people interact. When implementing physical distancing measures, the goal is to **maximize the distance** between people (**at least 2 metres in all directions**) and keep all interactions as **few** and **brief** as possible. This tip sheet provides recommendations that can be used in a variety of workplaces. Since every workplace is unique, apply the measures that work best for your setting.

Change where the work is done

- Workers whose jobs can be performed remotely should work from home (e.g., office and support staff not directly involved in on-site activities).
- Provide [accommodation](#) to workers at [higher risk](#) of severe disease or outcomes from contracting COVID-19 due to existing medical conditions.
- Use remote communication technologies such as video or teleconferencing for meetings and training.
- Hold traditionally indoor activities outdoors, weather permitting.
- Plan for periods of time when the entire workplace or specific services and facilities may need to close due to jurisdictional lockdowns, or due to high community and workplace COVID-19 transmission rates.

Modify buildings, furniture, and equipment

- Consider modifying indoor spaces to create more room for workers to spread out (e.g., remove walls, fold away wall partitions, repurpose unused spaces, etc.).
- Rearrange, remove, or block-off workstations, furniture, sinks, lockers, and equipment.
- In shared spaces for eating where people must remove their masks, make sure the space is well [ventilated](#), and that all tables and seats are spaced as far apart as possible. Remove extra seating to discourage overcrowding. Limit the maximum number of seats per table. Consider expanding the space used for eating (including outdoors, if possible).
- Position seating and workstations so workers are not directly facing each other.
- Install [physical barriers](#) such as plexiglass where physical distancing is difficult to maintain and workers are interacting with others (e.g., at sales and service counters, screening areas, etc.).
- Prevent people from entering spaces that they do not perform work in or need access to. Post signage and secure doors and gates if needed.
- Equip all workstations with everything workers need. Minimize the need to interact with others as much as possible.
- Consider using signs and floor markings to indicate where people should stand and walk to stay at least 2 metres apart in all directions.
- Consider establishing one-way walking routes in corridors and stairways to minimize cross traffic.
- If people are sharing congregate housing (e.g., bunkhouses, camps, dorms, etc.) place the beds as far apart as possible. Avoid orienting beds face-to-face, use head-to-toe orientation instead. Avoid using bunk beds.



Update or create new workplace policies and procedures

- Consider implementing and enforcing a physical distancing policy.
- Update all procedures impacted by physical distancing requirements.
- Discuss physical distancing measures in COVID-19 communications and training programs.
- Do not exceed the occupancy and gathering limits set by your jurisdiction, if applicable.
- Limit the number of persons gathered at one time, indoors and outdoors.
- Post room capacity signs at entrances to shared areas (e.g., kitchens, breakrooms, washrooms, conference rooms, elevators, etc.).
- Modify job tasks and activities that require workers to be in close contact with others, if possible.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives.
- Discourage people from gathering during breaks, including in outdoor break areas and weather shelters.
- Limit visits by external contractors and suppliers (i.e., plan contractor visits around work schedules, etc.).
- Assign each workplace fleet vehicle to a single worker, if possible.
- If group transportation (e.g., bus, van, carpooling etc.) is necessary, spread passengers out (e.g., staggered seating, assigned seats, skip rows, etc.), set the ventilation to outside air intake instead of recirculation, and open the vehicle windows (weather permitting).
- Discourage use of carpooling, public transit, and rideshare services; however, for workers who must use them, suggest they sit away from others and wear a mask.
- Plan for how people will maintain physical distance while evacuating or sheltering-in-place in the event of an emergency.
- Plan for how to safely isolate a person experiencing COVID-19 symptoms in the workplace if they cannot immediately leave.
- Make sure that sick-leave policies support workers who must stay away from the workplace due to COVID-19 illness or exposure (i.e., isolation and quarantine).
- Prepare for exceptions to distancing guidance (e.g., when providing emergency first aid or rescue), and make sure that other protective measures are used, such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

Consider using a cohort system

- Cohorts are groups of people who are scheduled to work, attend meetings and training, take breaks and mealtimes, participate in activities, ride on group transportation, and share living accommodations together (as needed).
- A cohort system can limit the spread between people and help local public health authorities with contact tracing if an outbreak occurs.
- Cohorts may be required for some work sectors (e.g., oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, education). Check with your jurisdiction.
- Make sure that members of different cohorts do not mingle with each other.
- Use smaller cohorts for people who may require more assistance with following COVID-19 precautions, such as young children or the elderly.
- To help reduce community spread, encourage workers to only work at one job location if possible, and to minimize in-person interactions with people they do not live with when not at work.

Adjust worker schedules and assignments

- Set daily staff levels to the fewest people needed to continue business activities.
- If less workers are scheduled or available, make sure that key roles are filled by trained individuals (e.g., supervisors, emergency first aid and spill responders, health and safety representatives, essential operations,



etc.).

- Stagger shift schedules to reduce crowding at entrances and exits, hallways, breakrooms, and punch-clocks.
- Incorporate extra time into workers' schedules for them to complete their regular tasks safely, while also meeting physical distancing, personal hygiene, and cleaning-disinfection requirements (e.g., without rushing or cutting steps).
- Assign workers to assist a single client, household group, or cohort at a time.
- If workers must use public transportation to come to work, consider flexible hours to allow them to avoid the busiest commuting times.
- Avoid all non-essential business travel.

Other ways to promote physical distancing and prevent crowds

- Offer goods and services online (e.g., online sales, tele-health) so clients do not need to come into the workplace.
- Use alternative ways to provide goods, such as curbside pickup or delivery.
- Manage bookings and cancellations online or over the phone. Discourage walk-ins.
- Offer flexible or extended cancellation and return policies, so sick clients do not feel pressured to come into your workplace.
- Ask clients to arrive on time for appointments to avoid gathering if waiting, and to leave promptly after appointments.
- Restrict the number of people allowed per appointment. Limit access to the workplace only to the appointment holder unless assistance or supervision from a companion is required.
- Hold group activities with the smallest number of participants possible (e.g., offering more frequent but smaller groups instead of one large group).
- Offer non-contact methods of work or modify work to be non-contact.
- Have participants face the same direction for as many activities as possible, and specifically avoid activities involving face-to-face positioning.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

Disclaimer: As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.