

COVID-19 Guidance for Commercial and Residential Buildings

The following guidance is for owners/operators of commercial and residential buildings to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 in multi-residential buildings such as hotels, condominiums, apartment buildings, student residences and other similar vertical living spaces. For more information, see [COVID-19 Information for Residents in Residential Buildings](#) and visit toronto.ca/COVID19.

The aim and purpose of this document is to assist individuals and businesses with information related to the Ontario Government's reopening framework as well as Toronto Public Health requirements to reduce the spread of COVID-19. It is important to know that breaches of some of these directions will constitute offences under provincial regulations or other public health legal requirements. While we aim to provide relevant and timely information, no guarantee can be given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information provided. This guidance is not intended to nor does it provide legal advice and should not be relied upon or treated as legal advice. Users seeking legal advice should consult with a qualified legal professional.

Owners and operators of commercial and residential buildings should consider the public health guidelines below, as well as City of Toronto and provincial requirements. **Owners and operators must ensure that they stay current and comply with the [provincial orders](#)** (e.g. limits on size of gatherings) and **City of Toronto [orders, directives, and bylaws](#)** (e.g. [mask/face coverings, apartment building bylaw](#)).

Use of non-medical face masks and coverings

- Masks or face coverings are mandatory within enclosed common areas of apartment buildings and condominium buildings as per the City of Toronto [bylaw](#) and indoor public spaces as per [O. Reg. 364/20](#). Examples of enclosed common areas include elevators, hallways, lobbies, laundry rooms and other shared facilities.
- Building operators are required to create a policy to ensure that everyone wears a mask or face covering while in these shared enclosed spaces. The mask or face covering must cover the wearer's mouth, nose, and chin. See our website for the [proper use of masks](#) and [how to safely put on and take off a mask](#).
- Owners and operators should use the [mask by-law checklist and sample policy](#) to also ensure that:
 - they post signs that contain the text included in the [City of Toronto bylaw](#) at all entrances to enclosed common areas;

Revised November 25, 2021

- all persons working at the apartment building or condominium are trained in the requirements of the policy and the provisions of the bylaw that apply to apartment buildings and condominium buildings; and
- they can provide a copy of their policy for inspection by City bylaw enforcement officers.
- Some individuals are unable to wear a mask due to age, health or other reasons. Train staff on who is [exempt](#). Do not request proof of an exemption.
- During a visit into a tenant's unit or guest's room, staff must wear a mask.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment (such as mask, face shield, eye protection) that covers the eyes, nose and mouth must be worn by staff if, while providing service in an indoor area, they:
 - are required to come within two metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering; and
 - are not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.
- Masks are also required in the public and shared spaces of hotels, motels, and premises used for open houses. See more information about the City of Toronto [bylaw](#) on our website.

Practice physical distancing

- Guests, tenants and staff must maintain at least two metres [physical distancing](#) from those they don't live with when possible.
- Property management should assess whether an impending service request is essential, and to postpone the service if it is not urgent.
 - Consider whether some tasks can be completed by the tenant themselves, rather than management entering the unit (e.g., replacing furnace filters).
- Property management should provide advanced notification to tenant of impending work.
- Staff carrying out essential work should do so in a separate room if the tenant is home, or keeping a physical distance between the staff and guests/tenant.
- Room service staff should not interact with hotel guests and should leave food orders at the door and be picked up by the guests.
- Install [plexiglass or other barriers](#), if possible, where there may be close contact between staff and patrons at service counters or security desks.
- Any required meetings such as annual general meetings, condo board meetings, or hearings that typically take place in person should be carried out using alternative methods such as video conferencing.
- Ensure residents can receive deliveries of essential goods, like medications and groceries/meals, to their unit if necessary (e.g. those who may be self-isolating, require accessibility supports, or cannot leave due to family care needs).

Revised November 25, 2021

- Residents who are able to should pick up deliveries in the lobby to reduce the number of visitors in the building.

Accessing indoor and outdoor building amenities

(e.g. gyms, pools, party rooms, [communal gardens](#), barbeque/picnic areas)

- Operators must ensure any indoor fitness centres or other indoor recreational facilities operate in compliance with [O. Reg. 364/20](#). See [Guidance for Indoor & Outdoor Sports & Recreational Fitness Facilities](#) for more information.
- Pools and other aquatic amenities must also comply with [O. Reg. 364/20](#). See [Guidance for Recreational Water Facilities](#) for more information.
- Organized public events must be limited to 25 people or less indoors, with physical distancing.
- Social gatherings must be limited to 100 people or less outdoors and 25 people or less indoors, with physical distancing.
- Cancel or hold virtually as much as possible all in-person activities that are discretionary.
- Implement a scheduling system for use of available amenities, as appropriate:
 - Schedule access through use of designated timeslots.
 - Allow extra time between usage for [cleaning and disinfecting](#) of high-touch surfaces and equipment (e.g. barbeque equipment).
- Use floor markings, pylons, or signs to encourage staff/residents/guests to maintain [physical distancing](#) while using amenities.
- Designate and clearly mark specific, separate entrances and exits for staff, tenants and guests as appropriate, and only permit entry and exit through these doors.
- Keep doors and windows open, where possible, to minimize the touching of door handles and increase ventilation, while maintaining the appropriate security.

Measures for all Workplaces, Businesses & Organizations

Review the [Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#) to plan and implement protocols to keep staff, tenants and visitors safe. Operators must also consider the following:

- **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
 - Make hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) available at entrances and in common areas, such as bathrooms, laundry rooms, gyms, playrooms and other high-traffic areas.
 - Encourage staff, tenants, and visitors to wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, if soap and water are not available.

Safety Plan

The person responsible for a business that is open shall prepare and make available a safety plan. It is strongly recommended that condominiums also prepare a safety plan. The plan must:

- Describe measures/procedures that have been or will be implemented in the business, place, facility or establishment to reduce spread of COVID.
- Include measures for screening, physical distancing, masks, cleaning, disinfecting, personal protective equipment (PPE) and preventing and controlling crowding.
- Be in writing and made available to any person for review, on request.
- Be posted in a visible place to come to the attention of those working or attending the location.

Use the [COVID-19 Safety Plan Checklist](#) to develop your safety plan.

Maintain heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems

- Increase the introduction and circulation of outdoor air by maximizing the outdoor air ratio of the HVAC system settings, or by opening windows and doors, where possible. Avoid recirculating air.
- Ensure the HVAC system(s) are properly maintained.
- Where provided, use the highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the HVAC system.
- Increase air-exchanges if possible.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
 - Seating should be arranged away from areas with high airflow (i.e. not in front of air vents).
- Facilities without HVAC systems should increase ventilation by opening windows and doors. However, do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety risk to staff and residents.
- Rooms where ceiling fans are used should have an upward airflow rotation.
- If portable fans are used, limit the blowing of air across people and surfaces by positioning them to provide an upward movement of air.
- There is no evidence for the use of portable air purifiers to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If used, follow the manufacturer's directions (and possibly the advice of a service professional) to decide where best to place the device. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on maintenance.
- For more information, review the [COVID-19: Transmission, Aerosols and Ventilation](#) fact sheet.

Resources to encourage public health measures

- Encourage tenants, guests and staff who were born in 2016 or earlier to get vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine. Read and share information [about the vaccine and where to get vaccinated](#).
 - Post signs and share [COVID-19 vaccine resources](#), available in multiple languages.
- Post information in high-traffic areas such as [elevators](#), lobbies, and [shared laundry areas](#), to increase compliance with public health measures:

Revised November 25, 2021

- [COVID-19: Posters & Graphics](#)
- [COVID-19 Fact Sheet](#)
- Encourage staff, tenants and visitors to download the [COVID Alert app](#) so they can be notified directly if they have been in close contact with someone who was contagious with COVID-19.

Other Resources

[COVID-19 Information for Residents in Residential Buildings](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Preventing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Guidance for Employers on Managing COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)

[Laundry Tips during COVID-19](#) (UNICEF)

[Reopening Ontario Act](#)

[Renting: Changes during COVID-19](#)

More Information

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References

Ministry of Health. *Guidance for Industry Operators*. Accessed on April 7, 2020.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_operators_guidance.pdf

New York City Health. *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). General Disinfection Guidance for Commercial or Residential Buildings*. Accessed on March 12, 2020.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/disinfection-guidance-for-commercial-residential-covid19.pdf>

Toronto Public Health. *2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)*. Accessed on March 12, 2020.

https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/8d59-Fact-Sheet_Novel-Coronavirus.pdf

Toronto Public Health. *COVID-19: Practising Physical Distancing*. Accessed on April 7,

2020. <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-health-advice/covid-19-practicing-physical-distancing/>

Government of Canada. *Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in Canada*. Accessed on March 12, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html#appendix>

Government of Canada. *Public health management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*. Accessed on March 12, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public->

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public->

Revised November 25, 2021

[health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-cases-contacts.html#app1](https://health.services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-cases-contacts.html#app1)

Australian Government, Department of Health. *Coronavirus (COVID-19) information for hotels and hotel staff*. Accessed on March 12, 2020. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-hotels-and-hotel-staff>

Public Health England. *Guidance, COVID-19: Decontamination in non-healthcare settings*. Accessed on March 12, 2020. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

British Columbia Public Safety & Emergency Services. *Tips for residents of apartments and other multiunit buildings*. Accessed on May 25, 2020. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/healthsafety/7473_covid-19_apartment_poster_85x11.pdf.

National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. *COVID-19 Precautions for Multi-unit Residential Buildings*. Accessed on May 25, 2020. <https://ncceh.ca/documents/guide/covid-19-precautions-multi-unit-residential-buildings>