COVID-19 Guidance for Commercial and Residential Buildings

The following are recommendations to help reduce the risk of exposures to acute respiratory illness including COVID-19 in buildings such as hotels, condominiums, apartment buildings and other similar vertical living spaces. This document may be updated as the situation is rapidly changing, and new information becomes available. For more general information about COVID-19, visit www.toronto.ca/COVID19.

COVID-19 is circulating in the community in Toronto. 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 up-to-date on and comply with any current provincial orders (e.g. limits on size of gatherings), City of Toronto orders, directives, and bylaws (e.g. maintaining and enforcing physical distancing, mandatory mask/face coverings, and the new apartment buildings bylaw). For information on the opening of non-essential common areas, refer to the Reopening Ontario website.

Promote Infection Prevention and Control Practices

Provide education
- Download, print and post signs in visible locations to raise awareness about COVID-19 and encourage healthy behaviours:
  - How the Virus can Spread
  - Physical Distancing
  - Protect Yourself
  - Wash your Hands
  - Cover your Cough
  - Do you Have COVID-19 Symptoms?
  - COVID-19 Fact Sheet
  - Face Masks and Coverings
- Post this information in highly used areas such as elevators, lobbies, shared laundry areas, and other relevant common areas.
- 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.

Practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Make alcohol-based hand sanitizer (70-90% alcohol concentration) available at entrances and in common areas, including, but not limited to, bathrooms, laundry rooms, gyms and playrooms, and other high traffic areas
- Encourage staff, tenants, and visitors to wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, if soap and water are not available.
Accessing building outdoor amenities (e.g. communal gardens, BBQ/picnic areas)

- Implement a scheduling system for use of amenities, as appropriate:
  - Schedule access through use of designated timeslots.
  - Ensure staff/residents/guests are aware of and complying with various emergency orders, directives and bylaws related to gathering sizes and physical distancing.
  - Ensure extra time between timeslots to allow for necessary cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and equipment (e.g. barbeque equipment).
  - Ensure markers (e.g. floor markings, pylons) are placed, as appropriate, to encourage appropriate physical distancing while using amenities.
- Provide education to staff/residents/guests, in advance, about COVID-19 and when to stay home.
- Designate and clearly mark specific, separate entrances and exits for each visitor 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.

Use non-medical face masks and coverings

- Beginning August 5, 2020, masks or face coverings are mandatory within enclosed common areas of apartment buildings and condominium buildings. Examples of enclosed common areas include elevators, hallways, lobbies, laundry rooms and other shared facilities. Apartment building owners and condominium corporations must develop and adopt 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. Owners and operators should also ensure that:
  - they post, at all entrances to enclosed common areas, clearly visible signage containing the text included in the City of Toronto bylaw;
  - 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.

- See our website for the proper use of masks and how to safely put on and take off a mask. 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 for these sites on our website.

Practice physical distancing

- Physical distancing means keeping a distance of two meters (six feet) from others.
- Property management should assess whether an impending service request is essential, and to postpone the service if it is not urgent.
- 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.
- In-house food services preparing food for room service should use single-use containers and cutlery.
- Room service staff should not interact with hotel guests and should leave food orders at the door and be picked up by the guests.

**Advice for management and staff**
- Review the guidance for workplaces, businesses and employers.
- Ensure residents can receive deliveries of essential goods, like medications and groceries/meals, at their unit door so they can avoid non-essential trips outside. Some residents may be self-isolating, and as a result will be unable to leave their units.
- Ensure all staff complete a health screening questionnaire before each shift. The questions can be completed on paper, online or by asking staff directly.
- Ensure staff stay home if sick. Employees or contracted workers who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to not come to work, and to seek appropriate medical attention.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible. For example, relax requirements for sick notes, and allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.
- Encourage good infection control in the workplace. Encourage frequent hand hygiene and physical distancing in the workplace and/or the use of a non-medical mask if social distancing is not feasible when around other workers.
- 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.
- Staff should be encouraged to wear a non-medical mask during a visit into a tenant’s unit as it be an additional protective measure when indoors and if in close contact with others.

**Enhance environmental cleaning and disinfection:**
- Review Public Health Ontario’s Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings fact sheet.
- Building operators and staff should follow these guidelines when cleaning and disinfecting the building environment:
  - Assign or designate staff to conduct environmental cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day.
  - Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
  - Frequently touched surfaces are most likely to be contaminated. Ensure cleaning staff clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in common areas. In addition to routine cleaning, surfaces that have frequent contact with hands should be cleaned and disinfected twice per day and when visibly dirty. Examples include doorknobs, elevator buttons, light switches, toilet handles, counters, and hand rails.
Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.

Check the expiry date of products you use and always follow manufacturer's instructions.

In addition to routine cleaning, check with your organization for any specific protocols for cleaning COVID-19.

Cleaning staff should use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as gloves, according to existing policies and procedures, as well as following label directions for all cleaning products.

Encourage and support proper handwashing by keeping washroom facilities stocked with soap and paper towels at all times, and ensure custodian staff keep hand washing sinks in a state of good repair.

There is no evidence to suggest that building waste needs any additional disinfection.

**Additional Considerations Related to Cases of COVID-19**

- Confirmed and suspected cases of COVID-19 are reported by health care providers and laboratories to public health. Workplaces other than health care settings do not need to report cases to public health.
- Maintain confidentiality of residents' personal health information if you are aware that a resident has COVID-19 or is a close contact of someone with COVID-19.
- Public health will perform a risk assessment for all exposures.
- Public health will provide advice regarding any other measures that the workplace or staff may need to take to reduce the risk of transmission.
- Unless advised by Toronto Public Health through the above assessment, there are no restrictions or special measures required for contacts of suspected cases of COVID-19 in the setting.

**More Information**

For more information, visit our website at [www.toronto.ca/COVID19](http://www.toronto.ca/COVID19) or call us at 416-338-7600.

**References**


