COVID-19 Class Order: April 1, 2020

Under what authority did Toronto Public Health issue a class order related to the COVID-19 outbreak to require persons to self-isolate?

The Health Protection and Promotion Act authorizes the Medical Officer of Health to make a class order to address the risks presented by the potential spread of COVID-19 to residents of Toronto.

Why did the Medical Officer of Health issue this class order?

Based on the continuing increase in the number of people contracting COVID-19 in Toronto, and experiences in similar cities around the world, this is a targeted mandatory measure that will strengthen our ability to reduce the loss of life from COVID-19, and preserve and protect the capacity of our health care system to respond and to provide care for those who need it. It also underscores how important it is for each resident to protect our city and save lives from COVID-19.

While most people who have or may have COVID-19, as well as their close contacts, have been compliant with instructions from public health authorities to self-isolate, there are individuals who do not take these measures seriously enough. This class order is a legal tool to help us ensure that everyone who needs to complies with the direction to self-isolate.

Who is required to self-isolate under this order?

All individuals who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and who have symptoms of COVID-19, as well as the close contacts of those individuals, are required to self-isolate. A close contact is a person who is caring for or living in the same household with someone who has COVID-19, or is otherwise identified as a close contact by Toronto Public Health.

When is the order effective? How long must people self-isolate?

The order is effective from 10:00 a.m. on April 1, 2020, and will remain in effect until such time as the Medical Officer of Health determines it is no longer required.

Self-isolation is generally for a period of 14 days from the first onset of symptoms. In some cases, public health officials may direct an individual to extend the period of isolation, depending upon symptoms and test results.

Are there any exceptions?

Close contacts who are asymptomatic and provide an essential service may continue to provide that essential service. In addition, the order does not restrict a person from receiving essential medical services or treatments, whether or not related to COVID-19. Other exceptions may be made in compelling circumstances, for example, individuals that do not have suitable housing to self-isolate, or who are fleeing domestic violence.

What does it mean to self-isolate under the order?

Individuals who are affected by the order are required to stay at home. If a person with COVID-19 is homeless, or where their home is otherwise unsuitable or unsafe for isolation purposes, they will be accommodated in an isolation facility. Self-isolation means not leaving home at all or having any visitors except as permitted by Toronto Public Health (for example, where a health care worker is visiting the home). People in self-isolation should arrange to have groceries and other necessities delivered to them. If you require any support with this, please notify Toronto Public Health.
How do I self-isolate at home?

Individuals who are asymptomatic may refer to: https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/95f0-How-to-Self-Isolate-No-Symptoms_EN.pdf


Individuals must take extra precautions to keep away from vulnerable people, including the elderly, people with weakened medical conditions, and people living in long term care or other close collective living arrangements.

How could the order be enforced if a member of the class of person fails to self-isolate?

Individuals who are required to self-isolate, as identified under this order, and who do not do so can be charged and fined up to $5,000.00 per day. Police assistance can be ordered for individuals who do not willingly comply.

Can a person challenge the order?

Individuals identified in the class may challenge the order by appealing to the Health Services Appeal and Review Board.

Contact information for the Health Services Appeal and Review Board can be found at: http://www.hsarb.on.ca/scripts/english/contact.asp

How does the Medical Officer of Health’s class order under the Health Protection and Promotion Act differ from the federal order under the Quarantine Act?

The federal government's quarantine order was aimed at all travellers entering Canada, effective March 25th, 2020. That order also imposes a 14 day home quarantine on travellers regardless of whether they have symptoms of COVID-19. For more information, see: https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/travel-advice/.

The federal order also provides some limited exceptions to self-quarantine, including individuals providing essential services, such as health care workers. Federal Public Health Officers can also detain and isolate persons who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 when they first enter the country.

In some cases, individuals subject to home quarantine or isolation measures under the federal quarantine order, may also be subject to the order issued by Toronto's Medical Officer of Health (for example, individuals who are diagnosed with COVID-19 and have also recently returned from travel).

More Information

If you have questions about the class order, please call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600.

If you require a health care assessment, call your primary care provider's office or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.