

December 10, 2020

Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (Public Health) has observed that some behaviours and practices may place your workplace at risk of a COVID-19 outbreak or closure. Every workplace is unique but, given work duties and work environment, some workplaces and employees may be at greater risk for COVID-19 transmission. It is important that employers reflect on the work environment and assess how operations can affect employee behaviours and how employee behaviours put your business at risk from COVID-19. Employers play an integral role in creating safe spaces for employees, visitors and customers.

To prevent the spread of COVID-19 in your workplace, please read and implement the following in your business.

Please find an attachment with this letter to be distributed to your employees.

Active COVID-19 Screening

- Using signage to try to prevent employees or visitors that are sick from entering the workplace is the minimum standard, but this may not work if employees have mild symptoms or do not have paid sick leave.
- Having an active screening process where employees complete an electronic form or pass a live screener each day has been shown to decrease COVID-19 entering the workplace from employees. Limit the number of entrances to your workplace and control (for retail or commercial space) or eliminate visitors where possible.
- Not letting COVID-19 into your workplace is the first step to a safe workplace.

Always Physical Distance

- If an employee can work remotely even for a portion of their job, please allow them to do so to decrease the number of employees on site.
- Maximize the use of all possible space within the workplace to encourage employees to maintain a two-metre distance wherever possible (e.g. remove or rearrange office furniture to create space, establish remote working policies, post signs with room capacity limits).
- Evidence shows lunchrooms and breakrooms are places where COVID-19 can spread within a workplace. Use unconventional spaces in the workplace (e.g. empty offices, storage areas) to create additional break/lunchrooms or implement staggered lunch/break times to create staff cohorts that always eat together. If one cohort gets COVID-19 your entire business is not at risk of shutting down.

Wear the Right Mask the Right Way At All Times

- If you want to keep COVID-19 out of your workplace this is the area to monitor internally.
- Not all masks are the same. A mask should be at least two layers and cover the mouth and nose. It must be worn at ALL times in ALL parts of the workplace covering the mouth and nose to protect the employee and to protect others. A single layer gaiter does not protect the employee or others.
- **A face shield or plastic mouthguard is not a replacement or alternative for a mask.**
- An employee who has a medical exemption preventing them from wearing a mask should be accommodated by working in an area away from other people for their protection and for the protection of others.
- A face covering is required at ALL times inside the workplace, unless it is required to be temporarily removed (e.g., to eat or drink which is why lunchrooms and breakrooms are sources of infection).
- If you have employees that are carpooling or eating lunch together offsite they must be wearing a face covering at ALL times or be aware that if one employee gets COVID-19 all will be considered at high risk of infection and required to self-isolate.
- The WDG Public Health website has shareable resources on how to select an appropriate face covering.

Hand Hygiene and Cleaning

- Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces in the workplace and follow all public health guidelines on cleaning protocols.
- Provide employees with access to hand hygiene stations (hand sanitizer, hand washing) in several locations around the workplace (e.g., entrances, break/lunchrooms).

See Appendices A and B for lists of resources that will help you support these behaviours in your workplace.

Sincerely,

Dr. N. J. Mercer, MD, MBA, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and CEO
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

APPENDIX A – Manufacturing (including food processing) and Wholesale Trade Sector

Resources:

The Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development provides COVID-19 Guidance for the [Manufacturing Sector](#) and the [Food Manufacturing and Processing Sector](#). At these links, you will find information on the following:

- Overview
- Best practise
- Protecting yourself and co-workers
- Physical distancing
- Workplace sanitation
- Adjust onsite and production schedules
- Track your workforce
- Reporting illness
- Workers with COVID-19
- Getting information on infection prevention and control
- Share information
- Post your policies
- Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development Reporting requirements
- Resources

Other resources relevant to the Manufacturing Sector and the Food Manufacturing and Processing Sector:

- Video: [COVID-19 & Getting Back to Work – Smart, Safe and Supportive](#)
- Video: [COVID-19 & Getting Back to Work – Mask Safety Basics](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance: Essential Workplaces](#)
- Video: [COVID-19 & Getting Back to Work: Food Processing](#)
- [Guidance on Health and Safety for Executives and Management During COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance on Health and Safety for Equipment Operators and General Labourers During COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance on Health and Safety for Quality Control Engineers and Technicians during COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance on Health and Safety for Warehouse Workers, Forklift Operators & Material Handlers during COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance on Health and Safety for Warehousing Sector during COVID-19](#)

APPENDIX B – General Resources

General information and links to all resources from Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health are available on our website at www.wdgppublichealth.ca

- [Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance: Essential Workplaces](#)
- [Preventing COVID-19 in the workplace: Employers, employees and essential service workers](#)
- [Risk mitigation tool for workplaces/businesses operating during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- Video: [COVID-19 & Getting Back to Work – Smart, Safe and Supportive](#)
- [Sector-specific guidelines and resources](#)

Physical Distancing Posters:

- [Physical distancing](#)
- [Physical distancing in elevators](#)

Masks and other Personal Protective Equipment:

- [Poster – STOP before entering workplace \(French version \[here\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [Organizations buying and selling personal protective equipment during COVID-19](#)
- [Mask Use for Non-Healthcare Workers](#)
- [Non-medical Masks and Face Coverings](#)
- [How to safely use a non-medical mask or face covering – Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- Video: [How to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly](#)
- Video: [COVID-19 & Getting Back to Work – Mask Safety Basics](#)

Hygiene and Cleaning Practices:

- [Poster – How to wash your hands](#)
- [How to wash your hands/How to use hand sanitizer](#)
- [COVID-19 Disinfectants, sanitizers, cleaners and soaps](#)
- [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\): List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada -](#)
- [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\): List of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19 -](#)
- [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)
- [Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during COVID-19](#)

Screening and Testing:

- [Workplace screening](#)
- [Screening Signage](#)
- [Provincial Testing Guidance \(section on Workplaces\)](#)
- [Getting tested for COVID-19](#)