

COVID-19 GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC BEACHES

This document provides recommendations for beach owners and operators to help stop the spread of COVID-19 at beaches. These guidelines may also be used to assist private beach associations or provincial parks.

Public beaches include any bathing area owned/operated by a city or town to which the general public has access, and where there is reason to believe there is recreational water use, such as beach signage, sectioned off swimming areas, water safety/rescue equipment, lifeguard chairs and so forth.

It is important to follow up-to-date provincial emergency orders and public health recommendations on public gatherings or to determine if recreational activities and amenities such as swim lessons, group sports, or play equipment can be held or used by visitors.

Visit york.ca/covid19 for regular updates on COVID-19 in York Region.

COVID-19 TRANSMISSION FROM RECREATIONAL WATERS

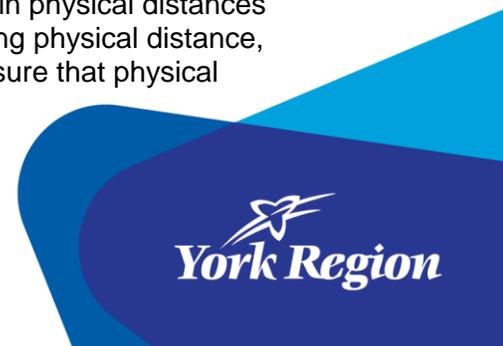
Current research suggests the risk of transmission from recreational water is very low. However, COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets when in close contact with others. It is common to see people swimming and playing in the water in close proximity to each another. Therefore, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is greater if physical distancing is not maintained.

Communicate public health recommendations before visitors come to the beach

- Encourage visitors to use beaches closer to home
- Encourage visitors displaying [symptoms](#) such as fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose, or those who have come into contact with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms, to not visit the beach
- Provide visitor education based on public health recommendations and local municipal restrictions
- Communicate using a variety of approaches including:
 - Social media and website content that can be shared by many different users and partner agencies to help get the information out to potential beach visitors
 - Public service announcements published in local newspapers
 - Signage posted on roads leading to the beach
 - Posting [COVID-19 Self-assessment signs](#) at all entrances and ensuring everyone self-screens before coming to the beach
 - Posting [Lower Your Risk of COVID-19](#) posters (available in English, [French](#), [Farsi](#), [Tamil Arabic](#), [Simplified Chinese](#) and [Traditional Chinese](#)) in visible locations as visitors arrive at the beach

MAINTAIN PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Take measures to ensure beach visitors from different households maintain physical distances of at least two metres or more from other people at all times. By maintaining physical distance, people are less likely to be exposed to COVID-19. While at the beach, ensure that physical distancing is maintained while in the water or on the shore.



Develop a beach plan to maintain physical distancing

- Public beach managers must have a plan and process for determining adequate spacing and square footage at the waterfront and beach
- This plan should include a process for enforcement and crowd control. Managers should consider the application of their own physical distancing bylaws (where enacted) and response from local police services and bylaw officers. This can include:
 - Dedicating a separate beach entrance and exit
 - Posting signage to indicate how people can maintain safe physical distancing while at the beach
 - Using ground markings and barriers to manage traffic flow
 - Making paths one way
 - Adding grids or circles on the beach to indicate safe physical distancing. This will help individuals and families judge distance more effectively
 - Reviewing parking to determine if physical distancing can be maintained in parking lots. If not, consider enhancing street parking or making some streets pedestrian-use only
 - Limiting the number of visitors to the beach to ensure physical distancing is maintained. This may include tracking visitor numbers and closing entrances to new visitors until people leave the beach
 - Encouraging visitors to go to alternative beaches if one beach is at maximum capacity (this would likely require consultation with other cities and towns)
 - Prohibiting organized activities such as beach volleyball, unless limited to one household at a time without sharing equipment

PROMOTE HAND HYGIENE

- Encourage all visitors to wash or sanitize their hands as they arrive at the beach
- Post hand washing and hand sanitizing posters in high traffic areas
- Encourage visitors to bring their own alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol-based) and disinfectant wipes to use during their beach visit

Support proper hand hygiene

- Post hand washing and hand sanitizing signage at sinks
- Ensure soap dispensers and paper towels are available and refilled frequently. Paper towels are preferred in public washrooms during COVID-19. Though no studies have pointed to COVID-19 being transmitted through electric air dryers, some studies have shown air dryers can spread other forms of bacteria
- Install hands-free faucets and automated paper towel dispensers if possible as they reduce touching and use of high-touch surfaces like handles. If hands-free appliances cannot be installed, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is required
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol-based) where possible at the entrance/exit of all washrooms

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Public washrooms are important facilities and depending on where they are located, can be busy. Therefore, safety and cleaning precautions are needed given the risks of COVID-19. Please see [Guidance for Public Washrooms - Golden Rules poster](#).

Support physical distancing

- Post physical distancing signage outside and inside the washroom in case of lineups
- Post maximum occupancy signs to further ensure visitors are distancing
- Establish floor markers in busier washrooms to indicate 2-metres spacing for users
- Decommission or tape off urinals and sink basins if needed to maintain the two metre (six foot) spacing
- If premise provides, allow for separate entrances and exits to the washroom. If the premise has only one entrance/exit, post signage to remind people to physically distance

Cleaning and disinfecting the facility

- Frequent cleaning and disinfection, including of garbage containers, should take place regularly, especially in commonly touched areas/surfaces. The frequency of cleaning and disinfection is dependent on the use of the facility
- Baby change tables may be used and require frequent cleaning and disinfection
- Ensure a daily log is kept on when washrooms are cleaned and by whom

Portable toilets

- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing signage at sinks
- Post physical distancing signage outside the portable toilet in case of lineups
- Increase cleaning protocols and service intervals
- To ensure physical distancing, the number of portable toilets may need to be increased
- Operators should ensure hand sanitizer is available and frequently refilled

WASTE DISPOSAL

- Provide sufficient numbers of garbage receptacles for customers to properly dispose of used sanitizing wipes, masks, gloves and other waste
- Encourage visitors to take garbage and recyclables home with them

PET SAFETY

- If dogs are allowed on the beach, they should be on leash and at least 2 metres away from other people and animals

RECREATION AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT

- It is a decision for beach managers to determine if they will or will not rent out equipment
- If sharing safety equipment, kickboards, pull buoys, or personal flotation devices (PFD), [disinfect](#) these items between each use

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Employers must have written measures and procedures in place for staff safety, including for infection prevention and control. Detailed COVID-19 guidelines are available on the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19](#) and [Province of Ontario](#) websites

- If a staff member working at the beach is diagnosed with COVID-19, the staff member must remain off work for 14 days following symptom onset and must receive clearance from the local public health unit before returning to work
- If a staff member is a close contact of an individual diagnosed with COVID-19, the staff member must remain off work for 14 days from last exposure
- The staff member should consult with the local public health unit to determine when they can return to work. Staff members should also report to their Employee Health/Occupational Health and Safety Department prior to returning to work
- Refer to the Lifesaving Society Guidance Document Guide to [Reopening Pools and Waterfront](#) for best practices for minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission

Please contact York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 if you have any questions.

RESOURCES

York Region has various resources, such as fact sheets, guidance documents, informational material (including signage/posters) and multimedia, about COVID-19 that can be accessed at york.ca/wps/portal/yorkhome/health/yr/covid-19/resourcesfactsheetsandvideos/covid19resources/

REFERENCES

- Lifesaving Society. (June 2020). *Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts*. Retrieved from: https://www.lifesavingsociety.com/media/324917/98guide_reopening%20pools_waterfronts_finalr%20-%20june%202020.pdf
- Public Services Health & Safety Association. (2020). Precautions When Working As A Parks Recreation Worker. Retrieved from: <https://www.pshsa.ca/resources/covid-19-precautions-when-working-as-a-parks-recreation-worke>
- Public Health Ontario. (2020). How to Care for Pets and Other Animals. Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet/factsheet-covid-19-domestic-animals.pdf?la=en>
- Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. (2020). Public Health Guidance for Use of Public Washrooms. Retrieved from: http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/docs/default-source/COVID-/public-washrooms-guidance-document_aoda-web.pdf?sfvrsn=0