KEEPING ESSENTIAL WORKERS SAFE DURING COVID-19

This document provides general guidance on the prevention and management of COVID-19 for essential workers in workplaces deemed essential by the Province of Ontario.

For further information, please visit COVID-19: Public Health Guidance for Essential Businesses Open to the Public or york.ca/covid19 for regular updates and additional guidance.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Typical symptoms of COVID-19 include:
- Fever
- New or worsening cough
- New or worsening shortness of breath

Other symptoms of COVID-19 include:
- Muscle aches, fatigue and headache
- Sore throat, runny nose,
- Diarrhea

Employees with symptoms of COVID-19 must notify their employer and not remain in the workplace. Where there is the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, employers need to consider their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to occupational illnesses and notify the Ministry of Labour, the workplace joint health and safety committee, and a trade union, if applicable. Follow your organization’s policies and procedures related to workplace illness and immediately return home to self-isolate. Contact your healthcare provider, York Region Public Health at 1-800-361-5653 or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for further assessment.

Ill individuals should seek assessment and testing at one of the three COVID-19 Assessment Centres in York Region:
- Mackenzie Health
- Markham-Stouffville Hospital
- Southlake Regional Health Centre

REDUCING COVID-19 EXPOSURE RISKS IN THE WORKPLACE

There are many considerations workplaces can encourage to reduce exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace:

- Physical distancing: Keep a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from others in the office and on work sites. See our Practice Physical Distancing fact sheet for more information
- Postpone or cancel in-person meetings: Utilize technology such as teleconference or video conference solutions
- Stay home if ill: See our Self-Isolation Advice fact sheet for more information
- Increase cleaning and disinfection throughout the office and work sites: See Public Health Ontario’s Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings fact sheet for information
- Ensure proper handwashing techniques: Ensure you refrain from touching your face and watch our Steps to Proper Handwashing video and utilize these actions both at work and at home
- Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when and where available: Information on donning and doffing PPE is available at york.ca/covid19
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICES OPERATORS

Management and staff both have a part to play in reducing exposure to COVID-19 in essential services operations. Consider adopting some of the following practices that have been implemented by other essential services operators in York Region.

Policies and procedures

- Review of sick time and isolation policies for multiple business locations
- Review of infection control practices (e.g. sanitizing of high-touch and/or shared surfaces, tools, handles, shopping carts, etc.)
- Develop procedures to inform staff about COVID-19 related concerns and information

Day to day

- Screening staff for illness and conducting wellness checks prior to the start of shifts
- Hold staff meetings each morning with information given to employees regarding the number of co-workers who are sick and off from work
- Use of signs directing staff and/or customers in aisles in order to limit potential close contact (for example, making aisles one-way only)
- Physical distancing inside and outside the facility (barriers to ensure staff and customers are physically distancing from each other)
- Physical distancing between cashiers and customers
- Security guards to enforce physical distancing
- No direct food handling (all food is packaged, with no bulk foods)
- Limiting number of employees in staff room(s) or offices and other work locations
- Reminders and key messages broadcast across public address (PA) systems regarding physical distancing, etc.

Equipment and sanitization

- Making PPE available for employees to wear during work hours:
  - Visit york.ca/covid19 under “Face Coverings and Face Masks”
  - Province on Ontario COVID-19: Stop the Spread - Face coverings and face masks
- Provide hand sanitizer for all employees
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or through air circulation

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit: york.ca/covid19

Contact: York Region Public Health at 1-800-361-5653


Visit: Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development – Infection Prevention and Control