

# 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](http://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](http://york.ca/covid19)

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

**Visit:** [Province of Ontario COVID-19: Support for Workers](#) or [Province of Ontario COVID-19: Support for businesses](#)

**Visit:** [Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development – Infection Prevention and Control](#)