

Managing COVID-19 Risks in the Workplace

C H E C K L I S T

Mitigation Principles and Measures

The following facts about COVID-19 and associated questions can help you consider the risks of COVID-19 in your workplace. The checklist also contains risk mitigation principles and measures to help prevent or limit the spread of COVID-19 in your business.

This checklist is adapted from the Public Health Agency of Canada's [How can my workplace/business mitigate COVID-19 risks.](#)

ESSENTIAL FACTS ABOUT COVID-19 TRANSMISSION

- If there is known COVID-19 in the community, there is high likelihood it will be introduced into the workplace.
- COVID-19 spreads from person to person, usually through respiratory droplets generated by coughing, sneezing, laughing, or talking during close interactions (i.e., within two metres). Person-to-person spread is more likely with prolonged contact. Crowded settings and confined indoor spaces are presumed to have greater risk
- COVID-19 can be spread by infected individuals who have mild symptoms or who have not yet and may never develop symptoms.
- COVID-19 can be spread through touching something with the virus on it, then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes before hands are properly washed.
- The virus can cause more severe illness among people who are 65 and over and those who have compromised immune systems or other underlying medical conditions.

EVALUATING WORKPLACE RISK

Think about your work environment; for each risk factor that you agree with, rank the risk as low, medium or high.

RISK FACTORS		RISK LEVEL		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
1	Employees have close interactions with customers or other employees; they are unable to maintain physical distancing of at least two metres.			
2	Customers have close interactions with other customers.			
3	Employees have prolonged, close interactions with customers or coworkers.			
4	Customers have prolonged, close interactions with other customers.			
5	There are several different people sharing the workplace, often with different people each shift.			
6	Employees frequently have contact with high-touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, service counters, card payment machines, appliances).			
7	Customers frequently have contact with high-touch surfaces.			
8	Travel to and from work involves public transit or shared ride services.			



9	The business cannot access and appropriately deploy all the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) required of employees.			
10	Employees and customers cannot maintain hand hygiene (e.g., no easy access to hot water and hand soap, hand sanitizer).			
11	The business lacks policies and procedures to ensure the workplace environment is meeting high standards of cleanliness and sanitation.			
12	There are employees that belong to higher-risk groups.			
13	There are customers that belong to higher-risk groups.			
14	The workplace/business has not employed enhanced cleaning and sanitation practices.			
15	The workplace/business has not created barriers between employees and customers where physical distancing is not possible.			

Which risk factors are of greater concern? What can be done in your workplace/business to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19?

RISK MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Businesses can employ different strategies to help prevent or limit the spread of COVID-19. Because COVID-19 is an infectious respiratory virus, the main strategy is to limit human-to-human contact and promote safe physical distancing measures. Everyone plays a part in making workplaces/businesses safer, including employers, employees, suppliers, customers, and all others who interact with workplaces/businesses. The following list of strategies (recommended measures) is a place to start. Think about how these can apply to your workplace and think of other measures you can follow.

Discourage people who are ill from entering the workplace/business

- Strengthen communication strategies for employees, customers, suppliers
- Require that employees stay at home if ill with symptoms of COVID-19 until criteria to discontinue isolation have been met, in consultation with the local public health authority or healthcare provider
- Adjust personal/sick leave policies to enable employees to stay home when ill, undergoing COVID-19 testing, in quarantine (self-isolation), or taking care of children or someone who is ill
- Post accessible signage to discourage employees, customers, and suppliers who are ill from entering the workplace/business setting

Promote and facilitate personal preventive practices

- Keep your employees informed about public health advice applicable to your workplace/business
- Promote the use of personal practices (e.g., frequent hand hygiene, avoiding touching the face, respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces with approved products)
 - Post signage that reminds employees/customers to practice these measures, ensuring that it is appropriate for the employees'/customers' age, ability, reading level, and language preferences
 - Provide increased access to hand hygiene facilities (e.g., by placing hand sanitizer dispensers in easy-to-see locations) and ensure accessibility for employees/customers with disabilities or other accommodation needs
- Support and encourage employees to take care of their mental health



Promote physical distancing

- If possible, reduce all physical contact by enabling telework (e.g., work from home, use of email and teleconferencing)
- Adopt a contactless business model (e.g., drive-through, delivery, curbside pickup)
- Establish two metre separation between employees and/or customers (e.g., desks, workstations, restaurant tables, or meeting rooms)
- Avoid multi-person meetings by using video conferencing technology where possible
- Restrict occupant capacity of indoor spaces to reduce crowding
- In narrow hallways or aisles, encourage unidirectional travel where possible
- Use visual cues to encourage two metre distance (e.g., accessible signage, floor markings)
- Reinforce general practices to maintain physical distancing, such as avoiding greetings like handshakes

Create physical barriers between employees and customers when physical distancing is not possible

- Install physical separations between employees/customers (e.g., physical barriers like a plexiglass window or cubicle higher than head-height)

Increase ventilation

- Open windows if possible and if weather permits
- Move work outside when possible

Mitigate risks from exposure to surfaces frequently touched by others

- Increase frequency of cleaning, especially of high-touch surfaces or equipment (e.g., shared photocopier, elevator buttons, cash register, washrooms)
- Reduce the number of common surfaces that need to be touched (e.g., prop doors open, no-touch waste containers)
- Restrict access to non-essential shared equipment
- Clean and disinfect essential shared equipment before and after use
- Offer contactless payment methods (i.e., minimize use of paper money), if possible

Employ measures that will mitigate virus transmission through work interactions

- When receiving packages, deliveries, or goods from suppliers, National Institutes of Health advises:
 - For non-perishable goods, let cardboard-packaged items sit for 24 hours and plastic packaging sit for 72 hours
 - For perishable goods, remove outer packaging and throw it directly in the trash, then put the items directly in the refrigerator
 - Thoroughly wash surfaces that were touched by the goods, and finally wash hands after handling
- If physical distancing is difficult to maintain, employees are recommended to wear a cloth mask to help protect others from asymptomatic transmission
- Use floor markers and other signs to control traffic flow and reduce congestion
- Ensure employees maintain physical distancing while in the lunchroom, change rooms, meeting rooms, and other common areas
- Assign workstations to a single user, if possible, or limit the number of users
- Assign or designate employees to conduct environmental cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day



** Note: there are many sector- and workplace-specific guidelines that have been prepared by interest groups in the tourism sector, such as the Hotel Association of Canada, Restaurants Canada, and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada.*

Mitigate risk for people at higher risk of severe illness

- Provide equitable workplace accommodations (e.g., role/task reassignment), if possible, for employees who have risk factors for severe disease
- Provide special accommodations for customers from vulnerable groups (e.g., dedicated shopping hours for seniors)

Modify practices to reduce how long employees/customers are in contact with each other and how many employees/customers come into contact with each other

- Consider modifying service delivery (e.g., reducing the number of customers using services at the same time, providing services outdoors)
- Close or restrict access to non-essential common areas
- Stagger work hours or days to reduce number of contacts
- Postpone non-essential meetings or travel

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