



# COVID-19: Information for Workplaces

To prevent the potential spread of the COVID-19 virus, it is vitally important for workplaces to take proactive steps to protect our community. We all have a role to play in keeping employees, clients, customers and volunteers safe and healthy.

## What you should know

Coronaviruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact, such as in a workplace, a household, or healthcare centre. There is no vaccine available to protect against the 2019 novel coronavirus.

There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs. Take these important steps to protect the health of employees, clients, customers, and volunteers. *These are general recommendations and do not supersede any requirements that are specific to certain settings.*

### a) Screening

- All people who are sick should stay home.
- Employers should screen employees, customers, clients and volunteers before entering the business to ensure that no person with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 enters the facility. It should be done over the phone, upon arrival, at entrances and regularly throughout the day.
- It is up to individual workplaces to determine their screening approach. Screening can be done actively or passively. Active screening is recommended for facilities that work with vulnerable populations (e.g. seniors/retirement homes, daycares, health care settings, communal living spaces), and passive screening for facilities working with the general public.
  - Passive screening involves placing a sign at all entrances and asking people that enter to screen themselves by reading the sign and answering the questions before entering.
  - Active screening involves having a designated staff person ask the screening questions before allowing someone to enter. Screening can include any combination of the following questions (based on the specific needs of the facility/population using the facility):
    - Are you experiencing any of the following symptoms: fever (38° and over), and/or a new or worsening cough?
    - Have you travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days?
    - Have you been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19?
    - Have you been in close contact with someone who is sick with respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing) who has recently travelled outside of Canada?Anyone that answers “YES” to any of these questions should be advised to self-isolate immediately and do the online self-assessment linked at [TBDHU.COM/coronavirus](https://www.tbdhu.com/coronavirus) to determine their next steps.

### b) Hand Hygiene

- Promote frequent handwashing using soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hands should be washed after using the washroom, before preparing or eating food, after contact with frequently touched surfaces, upon returning home from work or a public place.
- If soap and water aren't available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer with min. 60% alcohol can be used.
- Display posters promoting handwashing.

## Hand Hygiene...continued

- Provide access to handwashing facilities and place hand sanitizing dispensers in prominent locations throughout the workplace. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled.
- Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, and mouth in particular) with unwashed hands.
- Remind clients who are children to follow these recommendations and support them to do so.

## c) Cough Etiquette

- Encourage people to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve. Used tissues should immediately be thrown into a lined wastebasket and hands washed using soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Display posters promoting respiratory hygiene.
- Remind clients who are children to follow these recommendations and support them to do so.

## d) Environmental Cleaning

- Follow all current infection prevention and control practices for your organization.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning commonly touched surfaces (e.g., door knobs, handrails, light switches, phones, elevator buttons, computers, touch screen surfaces, desks, lunch tables, kitchens, washrooms, cash registers, seating areas, surface counters, customer service counters, bars, restaurant tables/menus, communal pens, etc.).
- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
  - a) Cleaners break down grease and remove organic material from the surface. If the surface is visibly dirty use a cleaner first before using disinfectants. Some products contain a cleaner and disinfectant combined.

b) Disinfectants have chemicals that kill most germs. Use a disinfectant after the surface has been cleaned. Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada. Check the expiry date of products and always follow manufacturer's instructions. Diluted bleach with a ratio of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water (5250 ppm) is an effective disinfectant if household disinfectants are not available.

c) Disinfectant wipes have combined cleaners and disinfectants in one solution. These are not recommended for heavily soiled surfaces. Disinfectant wipes may become dry due to fast drying properties and should be discarded if they become dry.

Note: baby wipes are not disinfectant and should not be used to clean and disinfectant surfaces.

Where possible, use pre-mixed solutions of disinfectants. If you need to prepare a product for use, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions to:

- Properly prepare the solution.
  - Allow adequate contact time for disinfectant to kill germs (see product label).
  - Wear gloves when handling cleaning products, including wipes.
  - Wear any other personal protective equipment recommended by the manufacturer.
- Remove items that cannot be easily cleaned (e.g. newspapers, magazines, etc.).
  - Dispose of waste into regular garbage bins that are lined. Employees who handle waste should not touch any used tissues and wash their hands with soap and water immediately after.
  - Where dishwashing occurs, normal practices should continue. No special soap is needed.
  - Where laundering occurs, normal laundry practices should continue.

## e) Social Distancing

- Encourage staff to avoid close contact from other people (at least 2 metres away). This includes:
  - avoid handshaking and hugging people
  - work from home when possible
  - avoid non-essential trips in the community
  - stay away from places where people gather
  - cancel, postpone or limit meetings
  - meet with coworkers via Skype, FaceTime or video/teleconference instead of in person
  - avoid visits to co-workers, clients or customers who may be at risk for illness
  - If you're not feeling ill, it is okay to spend time outdoors, or get essential goods as needed, but remember to keep a distance of at least 2 metres from others.
  - Display posters with this message in your workplace. Combine this with other communication (i.e. OH&S, intranet, briefings at meetings etc.). Social distancing posters are available for worksites at [TBDHU.COM/workplaces](http://TBDHU.COM/workplaces)
- If possible, increase the spatial separation between desks/workstations, as well as individuals (e.g., employees, customers) from each other. Ideally a 2 metre separation should be maintained, unless there is a physical barrier (e.g., cubicle, Plexiglas window).
- Where feasible, adjust policies/ procedures to reduce social contact, such as teleworking arrangements, flexible hours, staggering start times, use of email and teleconferencing.
- Consider issuing laptops or the equipment required to work remotely if necessary.
- Meeting and events: All organized public events over 50 people are prohibited. The decision to hold a small meeting or event should weigh the risks/benefits of the event and consider the population attending the event, event activities, crowding, duration, and event resources.

## Where to get more information

Thunder Bay District Health Unit is committed to providing employers with credible and current information and resources as the COVID-19 situation unfolds. We encourage you to regularly visit [tbdhu.com/workplaces](http://tbdhu.com/workplaces) where you will find:

- Screening information for employees and clients/customers
- Guidelines for specific worksites, such as food premises and personal service settings
- Public education posters
- A letter that employees can provide as a sick note
- Tips for workplaces to prepare contingency plans
- Considerations for promoting employees' mental health
- Links to other reliable and helpful sources

If you have questions about specific workplace scenarios, please call the Thunder Bay District Health Unit at (807) 625-5900 or 1-888-294-6630. Advise that you are calling regarding a workplace-related inquiry.