

# PHYSICAL DISTANCING IN THE WORKPLACE (COVID-19)

## Guidance for working in small workspaces



**Public Health**  
**Santé publique**  
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

The Government of Ontario ordered all non-essential workplaces to close. Only those on the Government of Ontario's [list of essential workplaces](#) are permitted to operate under the provincial emergency declaration.

Businesses that continue to operate **MUST** ensure that physical distancing measures are in place.

### What is physical distancing?

Physical Distancing (social distancing) means limiting the number of people you come into close contact with and distancing from each other to reduce the opportunity for illness to spread from person to person.

### How can employees and business owners practise physical distancing?

Businesses must take measures to protect employees and patrons and operate in accordance with all applicable laws including the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the regulations made under it. Businesses that continue to operate must comply with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including physical distancing measures, cleaning and disinfecting.

The following will help reduce workplace exposures to respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19 (coronavirus):

#### What can I do as an employee?

- ▶ Keep two metres (six feet) apart from others.
- ▶ Ask your employer about options to work from home, if possible. If you have meetings planned, conduct them virtually instead of in person.
- ▶ Wash your hands often and when visibly dirty with soap and water for 15 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ▶ Cover your cough or sneeze with your arm or a tissue. Throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- ▶ Avoid physical contact with others.
- ▶ Self-monitor for symptoms including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
- ▶ Self-isolate immediately if you become sick. If necessary, contact public health, your health care provider or Telehealth by phone. Do not drop-in.
- ▶ Stay home if you are sick.

#### What can I do as a business owner?

- ▶ Take advantage of virtual options to continue providing services. Advise employees to work from home, if possible.
- ▶ Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene by all employees.
- ▶ Limit the number of people that enter the establishment to maintain two metres (six feet) of distance between all patrons and employees.
- ▶ Notify patrons of the physical distance measures in place by posting them in prominent places.
- ▶ Provide hand sanitizing stations at entrances where possible.
- ▶ Install floor markings to promote physical distancing.
- ▶ Reduce the number of employees working at any one time, even if your business is busier than usual. Consider staggering shifts.

- ▶ Relax production targets and other measures of performance.
- ▶ Assign alternative work spaces to maintain two metres of distance between employees. Work back-to-back or use barriers (for example, cubicles or Plexiglass).
- ▶ Discourage workers from sharing phones, desks, offices, tools and equipment. Clean shared items after use.
- ▶ In smaller confined areas like takeout windows, work in a system to place products in a designated drop-off area. Products can then be picked up by another staff member to maintain physical distancing.
- ▶ Use passive and active screening measures such as posting signage or asking questions about exposure and symptoms.
  - consider conducting employee screening and temperature checks at entrances
  - learn more about screening and [guidance for industry operators](#) (Ministry of Health)
- ▶ Perform routine environmental cleaning and clean high touch surfaces often including countertops, handles, light switches, keypads, touchscreens and public areas. Learn about [cleaning and disinfection for public settings](#) (Public Health Ontario) and [guidance for food premises](#) (Ministry of Health).
- ▶ Protect employees from patrons by using screens or barriers.
- ▶ Wear a [non-medical mask](#) when proper physical distancing is not possible.

For more information, please contact Public Health Sudbury & Districts at 705.522.9200 (toll-free 1.866.522.9200), visit [www.phsd.ca/COVID-19](http://www.phsd.ca/COVID-19) or call Telehealth Ontario (24/7) at 1.866.797.0000 (TTY 1.866.797.0007).

For sector-specific health and safety measures to protect workers and customers, review [provincial guidance documents](#) from the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development and provincial health and safety associations (Government of Ontario).