

COVID-19 guidelines for public beaches



**Public Health
Santé publique**
SUDBURY & DISTRICTS

This guidance document for municipalities provides recommendations to help stop the spread of COVID-19, while using public beaches.

Public beaches include any public bathing area owned/operated by a municipality to which the general public has access, and where there is reason to believe that there is recreational use of the water (e.g. beach signage, sectioned off swimming area, water safety/rescue equipment, lifeguard chairs, etc.), which may result in waterborne illness or injury.

It is important for municipalities to adhere to provincial emergency orders and public health recommendations on gathering requirements or recommendations to determine if activities and amenities such as swim lessons, group sports, or play equipment can be held or utilized by beach goers.

COVID-19 transmission from recreational waters

Current research suggests the risk of transmission from recreational waters is very low. However, COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets when in close contact with others. It is common to see people swimming and playing in the water in close proximity of one another. Therefore, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 is greater if physical distancing is not maintained.

Communicate public health recommendations before visitors come to the beach

- Encourage visitors to use beaches close to their own communities, when possible.
- Encourage visitors displaying [symptoms](#) (i.e. fever, cough, difficulty breathing, muscle aches, fatigue, headache, sore throat, runny nose) or who have come into contact with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms, to not visit the beach.
- Provide visitor education based on public health recommendations and local municipal restrictions. Communicate using a variety of approaches including:

- Social media posts and website content that can be shared by a variety of users and partner agencies to get the information out to potential beach visitors.
- Public service announcements that local newspapers can publish.
- Posting signage on roads leading to the beach area.
- Posting [screening signs](#) at all entrances and ensure everyone self-screens before coming to the beach.
- Posting [Cover Your Cough](#) posters in visible locations as visitors arrive at the beach.

Maintain physical distance

Municipalities should take measures to ensure that beach visitors who are not from the same household maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more from other people at all times. By maintaining physical distance, people are less likely to be exposed to COVID-19. While at the beach, ensure that physical distancing is maintained while in the water, and while having fun on the shore.

Develop a beach plan to maintain physical distancing

- Public beach managers must have a plan and process for determining adequate spacing and square footage at the waterfront and beach.
- This plan should include a process for enforcement and crowd control. This can include:
 - Dedicating a beach entrance and exit.
 - Posting signage to indicate how people can maintain a safe distance while at the beach.
 - Use ground markings and barriers to manage traffic flow.
 - Consider making paths one way.
 - Consider adding grids or circles on the beach to indicate safe physical distancing. This will help individuals and families judge distance more effectively.
 - Review parking to determine if physical distancing can be maintained in parking lots. If not, consider enhancing street parking or making some streets for pedestrian use only.

COVID-19 guidelines for public beaches continued

- Limit the number of visitors to the beach to ensure physical distancing is maintained. This may include tracking the numbers on the beach and closing entrances to other visitors until people leave the beach before letting others in.
- Prohibit organized activities such as beach volleyball, etc., unless limited to one household at a time without shared equipment.

Promote hand hygiene

- Encourage all visitors to wash or sanitize their hands as they arrive at the beach.
- Encourage visitors to bring alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol-based) supplies to sanitize their hands.
- Post handwashing and hand sanitizing posters in high traffic areas. Encourage visitors to the beach to bring their own hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to be used during their beach visit.

Support proper hand hygiene

- Post signage on handwashing and hand sanitizing at sinks.
- Ensure that soap and paper towels are always available and are refilled frequently.
- Paper towels are preferred in public washrooms during COVID-19. Though no studies have pointed to COVID-19 being transmitted through electric air dryers, some studies show that air dryers can spread bacteria.
- Hands-free sinks and paper towel dispensers are preferred to avoid the use of handles which reduces high touch surfaces in washrooms. If hands-free appliances cannot be installed, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is required.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol-based) should be made available where possible at the entrance/exit of the washroom.

Promote wearing of non-medical masks

- Encourage all visitors to bring and wear their own non-medical mask. Public health agencies recommend wearing a non-medical mask (for example, a home-made cloth mask or face covering) as an added step to

protect others when physical distancing is challenging or not possible – even if you have no symptoms of COVID-19 (novel coronavirus).

- For more information refer to Public Health Ontario's factsheet [COVID-19: Non-medical Masks and Face Coverings](#).

Public washrooms

Public washrooms are important facilities as beaches open and depending on where they are located, they can be busy. Therefore, safety and cleaning precautions are needed given the risks of COVID-19. Please see [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings \(Public Health Ontario\)](#).

Support physical distancing

- Post physical distancing signage outside and inside the washroom in case of lineups.
- Floor markers to designate 2 metres (6 feet) spacing may be advisable in busier washrooms.
- Post maximum occupancy signs to further enhance physical distancing.
- Some urinals and sink basins may need to be decommissioned (taped off) if 2 metres (6 feet) spacing cannot be maintained in the current set up.
- If premise provides, allow for one entrance and exit of the public washroom. If the premise only has one entrance/exit, signage must be posted to remind people about physical distancing.

Other precautions

- Place signage in each stall instructing users to flush the toilet with the lid down, if applicable.
- Ventilation in the facility should be maximized.

Cleaning and disinfecting the facility

- Frequent cleaning (including garbage) and disinfection should take place, especially in commonly touched areas/surfaces.
- The frequency of the cleaning and disinfection is dependent on the use of the facility.
- Baby change tables may be used and will require frequent [cleaning and disinfection](#).
- Ensure a daily log is noted on when the washrooms were cleaned and by whom.

COVID-19 guidelines for public beaches continued

Portable toilets

- Post signage on handwashing and hand sanitizing at sinks.
- Post physical distancing signage outside the portable toilet in case of lineups.
- Increase cleaning protocols and service intervals.
- To ensure physical distancing, the number of portable toilets may need to be increased.
- Operators should ensure hand sanitizer is available and frequently refilled.

Waste disposal

- Provide sufficient numbers of garbage receptacles for customers to dispose of used sanitizing wipes, masks, gloves, and other waste properly.
- Encourage visitors to take garbage and recyclables home with them.

Pet safety

- If dogs are allowed on the beach, they should be on leash and at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people and animals.

Recreational and safety equipment

- It is a decision for beach managers whether or not they hire out equipment.
- If sharing safety equipment, kickboards, pull buoys, or personal flotation devices (PFD), [disinfect](#) between each use.

Occupational health and safety

- Employers must have written measures and procedures for staff safety, including for infection prevention and control. Detailed guidelines for COVID-19 are available on the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19](#) and [Province of Ontario](#) websites.

- If a staff member working at the beach is diagnosed with COVID-19, the staff member must remain off work for 14 days following symptom onset and must receive clearance from the local public health unit before returning to work.
- If a staff member is a close contact of an individual diagnosed with COVID-19, the staff member must remain off work for 14 days from last exposure.
- The staff member should consult with the local public health unit to determine when they can return to work. Staff members should also report to their Employee Health/Occupational Health and Safety Department prior to returning to work.
- Refer to the [Lifesaving Society Guidance Document Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfront](#) for best practices for minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

References

Lifesaving Society. (June 2020). Guide to Reopening Pools and Waterfronts. Retrieved from: https://www.lifesavingsociety.com/media/324917/98guide_reopening%20pools_waterfronts_final%20-%20june%202020.pdf

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This document has been adapted from Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2020.

**For more information contact Public Health Sudbury & Districts at 705.522.9200,
Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.**

Page 3 of 3