



COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Public Washrooms

October 27, 2021 ALERT: This guidance document has not been updated to reflect recent regulatory amendments related to physical distancing and capacity limits. Please refer to O. Reg. 364/20 for current requirements.

Public washrooms are important facilities to keep open and maintain in our communities to ensure that all residents have access to hand washing and a clean area for safe disposal of human waste. Depending on where they are located and the time of year, public washrooms can be busy. Therefore, precautions are needed given the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 transmission can occur when people are within close proximity to one another through the spread of droplets or through shared contact with surfaces. The COVID-19 virus has also been found in human fecal material. As a result, some changes in practice and equipment may be necessary. As one of the most important actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is handwashing, the benefits of accessing a washroom to enable this action far outweighs the potential risks. It is recommended that washrooms be opened where appropriate protective measures can be put in place.

This guidance document is for operators of washrooms that are available to the public. This document does not constitute legal advice and does not replace the need for operators of public washrooms to consult requirements from the Province, under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#). As well, the Ontario government has released the [Roadmap for Reopening](#) that has three steps of public health measures: **Step 1**, **Step 2**, and **Step 3**. There may be situations where provincial rules and local public health rules vary in level of restriction. When this is the case, operators of outdoor public spaces must ensure compliance with the measure that is most restrictive in terms of preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Support Proper Hand Hygiene

- Post signage on [handwashing and hand sanitizing](#) at sinks.
- Ensure that liquid soap and paper towels are always available and are refilled frequently to ensure the public can practice proper hand hygiene.
- Paper towels are preferred in public washrooms during COVID-19.
- 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.
- Hand sanitizer (of a minimum 60% alcohol, [approved for use by Health Canada](#), and has a DIN or NPN) should be made available where possible at the entrance/exit of the washroom. Include [signage](#) on how to use safely.

Support Physical Distancing

- Post [physical distancing and mask/face covering signage](#) outside and inside the washroom to remind visitors that physical distancing and masks are a requirement while waiting in line to enter the washroom. The requirement to maintain 2 metres distance and wear a mask/face covering is needed for indoor and outdoor line ups.
- Strategies to encourage physical distancing, such as floor markers to designate 2 m (6 foot) spacing may be advisable in busier washrooms.
- Post maximum occupancy signs to further enhance physical distancing. When determining maximum capacity, each visitor must be able to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from others.
- Some urinals and sink basins may need to be decommissioned (taped off) if 2 m (6 foot) spacing cannot be maintained in the current set up. If this is the case, this will have implications for the maximum capacity as well – be prepared for lineup management.

Require Face Coverings/Masks

- Provincial legislation requires the use of face coverings/masks for all indoor public spaces, with limited exemptions.
- [Post signs](#) outside and inside of public washrooms to remind visitors that masks/face coverings must be worn in the facilities and while waiting in line to use the facilities.

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. Open the windows (make sure screens are in good repair) and/or turn on the ventilation system.

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. High-touch surfaces are recommended to be cleaned and disinfected at least twice per day and as they become visibly dirty.
- Baby change tables may be used and will require frequent cleaning and disinfection.
- Use a disinfectant that's is [approved by Health Canada and has evidence for use against COVID-19](#).

Portable Toilets

- Use portable toilets that contain handwashing stations, or use a separate, fully-supplied hand washing station. At minimum, hand sanitizer must be available (of a minimum 60% alcohol, [approved for use by Health Canada](#), and has a DIN or NPN).
- Post [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) posters at sinks.
- Post [physical distancing and mask/face covering signage](#) outside the portable toilet in case of lineups.
- Increase [cleaning protocols](#) and service intervals. Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected twice per day or more often as required.
- To ensure physical distancing, the number of portable toilets may need to be increased.
- Operators should ensure hand sanitizer is available and frequently refilled.

Reference:

National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. (2020). *Public washrooms in the time of COVID-19: Facility features and user behaviours can influence safety*. Retrieved from: <https://ncceh.ca/content/blog/public-washrooms-time-covid-19-facility-features-and-user-behaviours-can-influence>