

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

Overview

Good public health practices can minimize transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza and common colds. These practices include: getting vaccinated against COVID-19, staying home when sick, proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, and maintaining ventilation systems.

This document has been developed to support business/entity operators or organizers in reducing the risk of transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, among attendees (workers, patrons and the general public) by providing options to integrate good public health practices into normal operations. The advice included is built on lessons learned and strategies that have been successful throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Since each setting is different, it is up to individual operators and organizers to determine which strategies, or combinations of strategies, are most appropriate in their facility or for their activity.

Businesses and entities are encouraged to promote COVID-19 vaccination to staff, volunteers and attendees and other eligible persons as part of their public health strategy.

All Albertans are required to follow all applicable Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) orders.

RISK MITIGATION

General Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COVID-19, including the more transmissible Omicron variant, and other respiratory infections are workplace hazards.• Operators must conduct a workplace hazard assessment, and develop and implement safe workplace practices to protect against the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Employers should refer to OHS and Alberta Labour for requirements and guidance on hazard assessment and risk mitigation plans.○ All employers are expected to maintain and reinforce all safe workplace practices and to implement measures to control and mitigate workplace hazards.• Operators are strongly encouraged to adopt best practices for infection prevention as part of their normal operating procedures. See the Infection Prevention Best Practices section below for more information on these measures:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Supporting staff to stay home when they are sick.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ All Albertans must isolate if they are a confirmed case of COVID-19, or have COVID-19 symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, runny nose or sore throat (refer to the Alberta Health Daily Checklist for children under 18; and adults 18 and older).
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing information on vaccines, and promoting their role in workplace health and safety. ○ Encouraging frequent hand hygiene and making hand sanitizer available throughout the workplace. ○ Encouraging attendees to follow respiratory etiquette. ○ Frequent cleaning and disinfecting. ● Operators must follow provincial requirements for face masks, and should be aware of federal and local requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Albertans are provincially required to wear face masks in Alberta Health Services facilities, continuing care settings and public transit vehicles in accordance current CMOH Orders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children 12 years of age and younger are not required to wear face masks on public transit (e.g., municipal buses and light rail transit). ○ Alberta Health provides Guidance for Masks for the General Public, which recommends wearing well-fitted, 3-layer cloth or disposable masks. ○ Medical masks can also be worn to provide additional protection for high-risk individuals, settings and activities. ● Operators are encouraged to increase staff awareness about the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and their role, such as posting signage around the workplace and providing basic training for staff.
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INFECTION PREVENTION BEST PRACTICES

Vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Vaccines help prevent people from getting infected and protect them from getting severely sick if they do become infected. Where vaccines are available (e.g., for COVID-19 or influenza), it is strongly recommended that all eligible individuals be immunized. ● Albertans aged 18 and older who are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to receive a third booster dose of vaccine five months after their second dose (or, if immunized with the Janssen vaccine, five months after their first dose). ● Employers wishing to require that employees be vaccinated as a condition of employment are encouraged to seek legal guidance in implementing this policy. ● Businesses have the discretion to create their own policies, but should obtain independent legal advice about their ability to request or make use of Albertans' personal health information.
Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Albertans with COVID-19 symptoms and Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 are legally required to isolate in accordance with CMOH Order 02-2022 (as amended by CMOH Order 04-2022):

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For Albertans who are fully vaccinated, the home isolation period is least 5 days or until the person’s symptoms resolve (whichever is longer). ○ When a fully vaccinated individual completes their isolation period, they must continue to mask at all times in the company of others when outside their home until 10 days have passed since the start of their COVID-19 symptoms or, if asymptomatic, the date when they took the first COVID-19 test. It is recommended that Albertans continue to limit their contacts during this period as much as possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ These individuals are not allowed to remove their mask in any indoor or outdoor public place for any reason, including if they have a medical masking exemption. ○ For Albertans who are not fully vaccinated, the isolation period is 10 days or until the person’s COVID-19 symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. ○ For residents of continuing care facilities, the isolation period is 10 days or until the person’s COVID-19 symptoms resolve, whichever is longer, regardless of vaccination status. ● An asymptomatic person who tests positive on a rapid test must isolate. If that person takes a second rapid test no less than 24 hours later and the result is negative, the person is not required to isolate, unless they develop symptoms. ● It is strongly recommended that individuals who are immuno-compromised isolate for 10 days regardless of immunization status. ● Businesses and individuals should monitor and adhere to the federal quarantine requirements for travellers. ● Operators are encouraged to ensure that there are no disincentives for workers or volunteers to stay home while sick or isolating. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Isolation is a mandatory requirement. ● Operators may consider providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flexible work-at-home arrangements; ○ Unpaid leave regardless of length of service, to be used when staff are sick; ○ Clarity around company policy defining when ill staff are expected to stay at home.
<p>Spacing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Respiratory infections tend to spread rapidly in enclosed spaces with a large number of people; increasing space between people and individuals from different households reduces the risk of transmission. ● Operators may consider options to increase spacing between workers, patrons and members of the public, such as:



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Arranging seating/tables/countertops/work stations/beds to allow spacing between attendees. ○ Allowing space between seating or work spaces; consider capacity limit for the venue. ○ Reducing the number of attendees in a location at one time through capacity limits or staggered scheduling (e.g., use reservations and staggered entry times to avoid people lingering or waiting in lines). ○ Implementing practices and/or encouraging staff and attendees to respect an individual's need for personal space. ○ Providing space to reduce crowding in general.
Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting frequent and proper hand hygiene for all attendees can help reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading through contact with surfaces and with other people. Operators can encourage hand hygiene by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. ○ Posting hand washing signs. ● Operators are encouraged to promote respiratory etiquette (e.g., coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow, promptly disposing of used tissues in a lined garbage bin).
Cleaning and Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Operators are encouraged to develop and implement procedures for cleaning and disinfecting of facilities including high traffic areas, common areas, public washrooms and showering facilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Items that are loaned, rented, or made freely available for use by multiple individuals, such as shopping carts and baskets, wheelchairs, and pushcarts, should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. ● Operators are encouraged to use cleaning and disinfection products according to the directions on the label. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN) issued by Health Canada. See the COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities for more information.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES

Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Operators are not required to provide regular testing for COVID-19 or other respiratory infections. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If an operator prefers to have testing for staff, they should follow the guidance available on alberta.ca/COVID.
Safer Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Offering virtual or outdoor options for meetings, gatherings, work and service delivery reduces opportunities for spread of infection, since there are fewer interactions and less build up of respiratory particles compared to indoor, in-person settings.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of alternative operational practices include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ curb-side pick up or contactless delivery; ○ drive-in or drive-through services; ○ work-from-home arrangements; ○ online and videoconferencing or teleconferencing options to staff. • Individuals should be supported in assessing their own risk of acquiring COVID-19, and, wherever possible, in taking precautions appropriate to their situation.
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical barriers remain an effective means of reducing transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. • Operators who wish to continue using barriers should consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Barriers are effective for separating individuals who are in close proximity (e.g., between booths at a restaurant, or a cashier and shopper at the point of purchase). ○ To be effective, barriers should be impermeable, and wide/tall enough to fully separate the individuals.
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators are encouraged to examine the need for specific types of PPE as part of their workplace safety and hazard assessment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Operators can use OHS's Respiratory Protective Equipment: An Employer's Guide to determine if PPE is required for certain activities in their facilities. • Operators and organizers must follow provincial requirements regarding face masks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Operators and organizers should be aware of any local or federal requirements for face masks. • Operators should have a plan to respond to staff or clients if they are exhibiting symptoms of a respiratory disease at the workplace, as isolation is still required for those with COVID-19 symptoms. This plan may include providing individuals with a medical mask for use during transportation home.
Ventilation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proper ventilation is an effective measure to reduce the concentration of airborne contaminants, including airborne disease, in indoor locations. It does this by increasing the rate of air change, reducing recirculation of air and increasing the use of outdoor air. • Operators are encouraged to ensure ventilation systems are well maintained and functioning optimally. • The variety and complexity of HVAC systems in large buildings requires professional interpretation of technical guidelines and codes.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Portable air purifiers should not be seen as a replacement for adequate ventilation, but may be considered as an additional protection in situations where enhancing natural or mechanical ventilation is not possible.• If portable air purifiers are used, the air purifier should be equipped with a high-efficiency particle air (HEPA) filter, certified by a recognized body such as the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM), and be large enough for the size of the room or area where it will be used. |
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This document and the recommendations within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed.

Last Revised: March 2022