

COVID-19

Back to basics

March 2021

www.ttc.ca/EmployeeHealth



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Introduction



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The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every part of our lives – especially how we do our jobs safely. As an essential service, the TTC has remained open during the entire pandemic. The safety of our employees remains a top priority for the TTC. Throughout the pandemic, we have worked closely with Toronto Public Health to ensure the policies being developed and the information being given to TTC employees are evidence-based.

This booklet contains the TTC’s most up-to-date policies as they relate to COVID-19 and how to safely attend the workplace. It summarizes information that we have released through various safety notices and policy memos over the past year and makes sure that the most recent information is all in one place and easy to access. While printed copies of this booklet will be available, for the most up-to-date version please check online at www.ttc.ca/EmployeeHealth.

We have learned a lot over the past year. And we continue to learn as the science around COVID-19 continues to evolve. This is particularly true now as there are several new variants of COVID-19 – the UK variant and the South African variant to name a few – that have been detected in Ontario. With COVID-19 continuing to be a real threat in the community, it is critical that TTC employees continue to be informed about how to protect themselves – we hope this booklet will help with that.

Your safety is important to us – working together, we can protect each other and ourselves from this awful disease.

Please remain vigilant and stay safe.

What we know about COVID-19

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new coronavirus. The long-term impacts of COVID-19 are not yet known.

Transmission

COVID-19 is spread by respiratory droplets, most often from person-to-person, and can spread before they begin to show symptoms.

COVID-19 can be spread:

- When people gather close together, talking, laughing, singing, sneezing or coughing.
- When people linger to talk, longer than 15 minutes, forgetting to physical distance.
- When touching the mouth, nose or eyes after touching surfaces contaminated with the virus.

While COVID-19 can spread from aerosols generated during medical or dental procedures, airborne transmission is not a common way the virus is spread. COVID-19 is not known to spread through airborne transmission in community settings, ventilation systems or through water.

Symptoms



Common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, trouble swallowing, sore throat, runny nose, loss of taste or smell, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and difficulty breathing.

Symptoms can take up to 14 days to appear. Older adults and children may also have general symptoms such as chills, headaches, sleeping more than usual, feeling disoriented, confusion, muscle aches, dizziness, weakness, or falls.

Potential for complications

Older adults and people with health conditions are at greater risk for serious illness, requiring hospital care. In very rare cases, some children can get an unusual inflammatory condition. Seek medical attention right away if a child is not improving or gets a rash, long lasting fever, pink eyes and/or swelling to hands and feet.

Steps to keep everyone safe

- Limit non-essential trips outside your home.
- Stay home if you are feeling unwell.
- Keep a two-metre distance from others.
- Wear a face covering that covers your nose and chin.
- Wash your hands often or use alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.

Source: Toronto Public Health

Active COVID-19 screening

On Sept. 25, 2020, the provincial government amended Ontario Regulation 364/20 to make COVID-19 screening mandatory for all businesses and organizations. Employers are required to ensure active screening is conducted for all workers and essential visitors who enter the workplace.

Screening is required to ensure employees do not enter the workplace while sick or displaying COVID-19 symptoms, or if they have had close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 or with recent COVID-19 symptoms.

To minimize risk of spreading the virus, employees **should not** attend the workplace while sick and/or when they are waiting for COVID-19 test results because they are experiencing symptoms, have had close contact with a positive COVID-19 individual or have been contacted by a health official.

Screening can be done one of three ways:

1) Online screening tool

Before each work shift, employees must log in to MyTTC | Home (www.myttc.ttc.ca) using the Google Chrome browser on a computer, tablet or their mobile device. Access the form by clicking the COVID-19 Online Screening Form tile on the home page.

Employees will need their employee number and secure password to log in. If they need to change or reset their password, information is available in the FAQ section of the MyTTC | Knowledge Base. It is an employee's responsibility to ensure they can access MyTTC | Home. Employees can also contact the IT Service Desk at 416-393-4357 for assistance.

All employees (unionized and non-unionized) who are attending the workplace will be required to complete the COVID-19 Online Screening Form within two hours prior to starting their shift. For example, an employee starting at 6 a.m. may complete the form anytime between 4 a.m. and 6 a.m.

Once completed, the Online Screening Form creates a COVID-19 Fast Pass. This COVID-19 Fast Pass is forwarded to your supervisor or other attendance management person to allow access to the worksite for that shift. The completed COVID-19 Fast Pass can also be shown to the gatehouse attendant as proof of successful screening for that day to access the workplace.

2) Third-party screening at the entrance to critical work locations

If the employee works at a location that has in-person screening, they can answer the screening questions verbally instead of the online form. Employees will be asked a series of screening questions prior to entering the workplace. Along with reviewing any symptom an employee might have, the questions include:

- Have you recently been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results because you are experiencing symptoms, have had close contact with a positive COVID-19 individual or have been contacted by a health official?
- Have you travelled outside of Canada or had close contact with anyone who has travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days and has COVID-19 symptoms?
- Have you been in close contact with someone who has any of the following: confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?



COVID-19 Screening for all TTC employees, contractors, and visitors

1. Do you have any of the following new OR worsening symptoms that are not associated with a known chronic or stable medical condition:



Fever or chills



Cough



Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing



Sore throat



Difficulty swallowing



Decrease of taste or smell



Headaches



Unexplained fatigue or malaise



Diarrhea or abdominal pain



Nausea or vomiting



Pink eye (conjunctivitis)



Runny nose without known cause



Nasal congestion without other known cause

2. Have you recently been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting results because you are experiencing symptoms, have had close contact with a positive COVID-19 individual or have been contacted by a health official?

3. Have you travelled outside of Canada or had close contact with anyone that has travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days and has COVID-19 symptoms?

4. Have you been in close contact with (i.e. within 6 feet and for 15 minutes or more) someone who has any of the following:



Confirmed/probable COVID-19



New respiratory symptoms



Employees, contractors and visitors that have answered NO to all questions will be allowed to enter the workplace or the building. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before you start working. Practice physical distancing. Wear a non-medical mask or face covering at all times.



Employees, contractors, and visitors that have answered YES to any of these questions CANNOT enter the workplace or the building. Return home and contact your local Public Health Authority, Primary Care Physician or Telehealth Ontario for further instructions. Contact your supervisor by phone to let them know that you are not able to enter the workplace and follow their instructions.

Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000



September 30 2020

3) **In-person screening by management at the work location**

Employees should be given the screening to complete at the beginning of the shift. Management should collect and review the forms and determine if any further action is required.

If an employee has completed the screening process and is not allowed to enter the workplace (indicated with a 'X' and instructions or they have answered yes to any of the screening questions), they must follow the instructions provided on the form and contact their supervisor. The employee should also contact their public health authority, primary care physician or Telehealth Ontario for further instructions.

Remind employees that when they call in sick, they should let their supervisor know if they think it is COVID-related so that the work location can proactively self-isolate any close contacts at the workplace.

TTC employees are also being asked to self-isolate if they have had close contact with someone with new respiratory symptoms. However, Toronto Public Health is only recommending that employees self-monitor in that circumstance.

Why is TTC exceeding public health guidelines?

TTC takes the health and safety of its employees and customers very seriously.

Given the recent increase in cases in Toronto and the fact that most of our employees perform job functions that are customer facing, the TTC has decided to be more stringent on self-isolation requirements.

Here are some examples of situations where employees are in close contact with individuals with one more COVID-19 symptoms. In these cases, the protocols must be followed:

- **Symptomatic close contact tests positive**, employee must self-isolate and can return once cleared by public health.
- **Symptomatic close contact tests negative or alternate medical diagnosis by a healthcare professional is received**, employee can return to work provided they do not have any symptoms.
- **Symptomatic close contact who has not been tested**, employee must stay home for up to 14 days (from last date of contact).
- **Symptomatic close contact is awaiting COVID-19 testing results**, employee must stay home until their negative result is received.

In order to safely self-isolate, employees must remember to:

- Isolate yourself (stay in a separate room)
- Wear a mask or face covering when leaving your room
- Maintain a distance of two metres (six feet) when outside your room
- Use a separate kitchen/bathroom
- Not eat meals in the same area with others in your home
- Not share a bed

With COVID-19 still prevalent in the community, employees are reminded to self-monitor for symptoms at all times and not come to work if they are sick.

Preventative measures

Hand washing facilities

Hand sanitizer is available through the Materials and Procurement Department.

It is recommended that stocks of hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes be checked and replenished frequently (at the beginning and the end of the shift) so that it is always available for use.

Physical distancing

Every effort should be made to maintain physical distance. The Medical Officer of Health has indicated that we should expect physical distancing to be part of our lives for the foreseeable future.

- Practice physical distancing of at least two metres at all times.
- Schedule/stagger breaks, wash-up time and lunch to minimize the potential to gather.
- Always wear a face covering both indoors and outdoors, and especially where there is potential contact with others.
- Wear eye protection (safety glasses with side shields, prescription safety glasses with side shields or a face shield) where there is exposure to others without face coverings and physical distance (two metres or greater) cannot be maintained at all times.
- Avoid having breaks together where masks are removed to eat, drink or smoke.
- Avoid carpooling to work with co-workers or individuals who do not live in your household.

Anti-fogging products

There are a number of anti-fogging products available as well as anti-fogging safety glasses with anti-fogging properties built in. These products are available through the [Hansler Smith Safety Catalogue](#).

This [video](#) provides helpful information on how to put on your mask correctly and how to prevent your glasses from fogging up when wearing a mask.

Medical-grade masks

The TTC has implemented the use of medical-grade masks as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for positions that may not be able to physically distance at all times during their work. These positions include:

- Employees providing customer service who may come in close contact with a customer or member of the public, such as customer service ambassadors, operators, fare inspectors or special constables.
- Maintenance employees who cannot maintain physical distance during the course of their work.
- Employees who are required to carpool to various work locations during their shifts.
- Employees who provide support to other departments and who may come into close contact with other employees as a result. These employees include IT Services as well as individuals from Materials Management.



Employees who can maintain physical distance during the course of their work should continue to do so. These employees should also continue wearing a non-medical face covering or mask.

Maintenance employees using respiratory protection as Personal Protective Equipment

Some maintenance employees use N95 respirators and/or elastomeric half/full face piece respirators with P100 filters (with exhalation valves) when working with non-COVID-19 respiratory hazards such as particulates and silica. These respirators can provide protection against COVID-19 when:

- Worn consistently and at all times around others where physical distance cannot be maintained;
- Worn properly and in compliance with the requirements of the Respiratory Protection Program; and
- When each and every employee involved in the work wears the same type of respiratory protection.

Because these respirators have exhalation valves, they do not filter out the exhaled air and do not protect others.

Once the work is complete and the non-COVID-19 respiratory hazard is no longer present, employees must continue to wear a non-medical mask or face covering at all times both indoors and outdoors.

Mandatory use of face coverings or masks

All employees are required to wear a mask or face covering at all times both indoors and outdoors while working on TTC property.

Here are some examples illustrating when face coverings are and are not required.

Face covering required	Face covering not required
Operators in buses, streetcars and subways, even if you are behind the protective barrier or in your cab.	Alone in personal vehicles.
Workstations (regardless of barriers and/or partitions) and offices.	Working from home.
In-person chat (during work or on break) with another TTC employee while on TTC property or in a TTC work area.	
Common indoor areas (TTC-owned and leased) – kitchen, break room, meeting room, photocopier area, bathroom, hallway, stairwell, lobby, elevators and lunchrooms.	When eating or drinking. Physical distance must be maintained at all times.
Common outdoor areas owned and/or controlled by TTC. This includes upon entering and immediately outside TTC properties (e.g. Hillcrest yard, Davisville etc.) or a TTC designated work area (e.g. street construction).	Designated smoking areas, while smoking. Physical distance must be maintained at all times.
Non-revenue vehicles with two people present (medical-rated masks must be worn).	

Eye Protection

Employees who cannot maintain physical distancing at all times during their work should wear eye protection such as a face shield, safety glasses with side-shields, safety glasses with side-shields, goggles, or safety glasses with foam gasket. Face shields must not be worn when operating any vehicle.

Eye protection should be worn in addition to a medical-grade mask which must cover your nose, mouth and chin at all times.

Disinfection

Disinfection is the inactivation (“killing”) of disease-causing microorganisms, including viruses, bacteria and fungi.

One mode of disinfection is not preferred over another (e.g., wipes versus fogging). The critical element is that manufacturer’s instructions are followed, regardless of application.

There is a process that is managed by the Plant Maintenance Department regarding special disinfection after a COVID-19 confirmed positive case. Instructions have been shared with management and the JHSC.

Disinfection of shared workspaces



Shared workspaces should be disinfected when one employee passes the workspace to another employee. Examples of shared workspaces include shared desks, lunchrooms, tools and vehicle operator areas.

Disinfectant wipes are available at your work location. A sufficient quantity should be taken at the beginning of the shift to disinfect all shared surfaces in your work area.

If there are no wipes available, speak to your manager or supervisor.

Special disinfection request

The building services section of Plant Maintenance Department has established a contract to perform special disinfection work at various TTC facilities/buildings to address COVID-19 positive cases in the workplace.

Access a [request form](#) and follow the instructions on the back to have your facility disinfected after a positive COVID-19 case.

Gatherings

Social gatherings of any sort are prohibited until further notice. This means:

- No social events or communal catered food events (retirements, holiday celebrations, birthdays, catered coffee/donuts, hot food, pizza, United Way events, BBQs, etc.).
- No open trays of shared foods such as cookies, cakes or other treats.
- No carpooling except in TTC non-revenue vehicles with strict limits enforced (maximum two people, one in the front and the other in the back as far away as possible with the use of medical-grade masks).
- No social gatherings at or outside work.



Effective immediately, workplace gatherings will be reduced to five people in common areas. Examples include, but are not limited to, lunchrooms (where space permits), job briefings, meeting rooms, and presentations. Meetings must be held virtually. Job briefings should be held outside, as much as possible, where physical distance can be maintained.

Practice physical distancing at all times. Physical distancing means maintaining a distance of at least two metres from others all the time.

The only exception to this rule is workplace essential training provided by the Operations Training Centre, which has a gathering limit of 10 (including the instructor).

Contact tracing

Contact tracing is a process that identifies, educates and monitors individuals who have had close contact with someone who is infected with a virus. These individuals are at a higher risk of becoming infected and spreading the virus to others. Contact tracing can help individuals understand their risk and limit further spread. Contact tracing is a critical component of Toronto Public Health's COVID-19 response to reduce the spread of infectious diseases.

Contact tracing is performed by the Safety and Environment Department of the TTC through processes that were developed after extensive consultation with Toronto Public Health.

Personal information from the positive employee, such as phone numbers and address, is gathered so that the appropriate health unit can be advised. We will also need to know when the positive employee first became sick, when they were tested, when they were confirmed positive, and their last day of work. We also gather information about any close contacts with other TTC employees on the last day worked and in the 48-hour period prior to symptoms. If the employee is asymptomatic, information is gathered about any close contacts that occurred 48 hours prior to their COVID-19 positive test result, or if known, 48 hours after their last high-risk contact with someone who has COVID-19. This information needs to be quickly and accurately determined so that it can be forwarded to the Safety and Environment Department for review and direction.

Close contact refers to having contact with another person within approximately two metres for a **cumulative** period of approximately 15 minutes in a 24-hour period. In addition, someone may also be a close contact if they live in the same house or spend extended time with you in a closed space (e.g. meeting room, office space) regardless of distance. Direct contact refers to actual physical contact with infectious body fluids (e.g. shaking hands, or being coughed or sneezed on).

The outcome is generally a direction for specific TTC employees to either self-monitor or self-isolate.

What is the main difference between self-monitoring and self-isolating?

Self-monitoring involves a regular personal assessment to determine if you begin to develop COVID-19 symptoms. Due to COVID-19 being community spread, we should all be self-monitoring.

Self-isolating involves staying at home and not going to work. Information on how to self-monitor, self-isolate, and care for someone who is self-isolating is available on [Public Health Ontario's COVID-19 Public Resources page](#).

Individuals recommended by TTC to self-isolate due to direct close contact with an individual with COVID-19 must not return for 14 days from the last time they were in contact with the individual with COVID-19. They should also get tested. They are expected to return to work 14 days after, provided they have no symptoms. They will be tracked and released by the TTC Occupational Health and Employee Wellbeing contact assigned to your group.

Why are some employees sent home immediately? Why are some others sent home and then called back to work?

The TTC strongly recommends that employees with COVID-19 symptoms get tested. In some cases, the TTC will complete preliminary contact tracing for those individuals and may, out of an abundance of caution, direct employees identified as close contacts to self-isolate until the COVID-19 testing results have been received. If the results come back negative, employees who were directed to self-isolate will be asked to return to work.

Notification of COVID-19 positive cases in the workplace

According to [Section 3.5 in the Corporate Procedure - Positive COVID-19 Result Process](#), managers and supervisors are responsible and accountable for sharing information with incident work location employees, as required, based on the circumstances.

Corporate notices are provided daily of COVID-19 positive cases in the workplace. Cases that come in after 5 p.m. will be sent out the next day.

Names of anyone who has tested positive and/or who are considered close contacts **must remain confidential and cannot to be shared**. This can be difficult in small groups as it may be obvious who is missing. However, as it is health-related, we cannot confirm who it is, just that someone has tested positive and/or close contacts were identified and they are self-isolating.

What information gets shared?

- Employees are told that someone (not named) in their work area was identified as testing positive for COVID-19.
- If there were any close contacts (not names) of that person identified within 48 hours prior to that person having symptoms.
- What has been done and will be done to ensure that the risk going forward remains low.

When does the information get shared?

- Usually given by the supervisor at the start of shift for most workers.
- If an employee is identified as a close contact, they are notified as soon as possible (at home if necessary) to advise them to stay home, self-isolate and get tested.
- Depending on how easy and quickly the contact tracing was done, there might not be much additional notice to the work area prior to the corporate notice.
- If contact tracing is complex and requires additional time, there may need to be some same-day discussion with employees if details about contact tracing are not yet available.

The difference between an outbreak and a cluster in the workplace

An **outbreak** involves a setting, such as a workplace, with two or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases within 14 days **and** an **epidemiological link** between these cases indicating that they could have reasonably acquired their infection in the setting.

An **epidemiologic link** is a place and time during which transmission could have reasonably occurred between confirmed cases within a setting.

A **cluster** is a setting with two or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases within a 14-day period that are under investigation for an epidemiological link. It is possible for cases to occur by coincidence, meaning they did not acquire the virus at the workplace. If this is the case, it would be considered a cluster of cases, not an outbreak.

Reporting COVID-19 concerns



Health and safety in the workplace is everyone's responsibility. Reporting hazards (including COVID-19 concerns) on the job that have the potential to cause harm to you and your co-workers is not only a legal duty but an ethical obligation. Timely reporting allows your supervisor to resolve the hazard before it can cause harm so that your health and safety, and the health and safety of your co-workers, are protected.

It is a worker's duty to report all health and safety concerns, including COVID-related ones, to their supervisors. Employees can also raise these concerns to their lead hand, shop steward, and the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

It is important that all COVID-19 concerns are addressed in a timely manner to minimize the potential for virus transmission in the workplace.

Access mental health and wellbeing supports

The pandemic has impacted us all in different ways. It is important that we all check in on our own mental health and wellness. To help cope with these challenges, there are a variety of confidential supports and resources available to all employees and their families.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, or if you or someone you know is **thinking of suicide**, please **call 911 or go to your nearest hospital or emergency department**.

Employee Family and Assistance Program (EFAP) by MorneauShepell

1-800-572-0039 | TTY: 1-877-338-0275 | MyEAP App | [workhealthlife.com](https://www.workhealthlife.com)

Access immediate, confidential counselling and resources any day or time. Morneau Shepell's digital mental health support also includes articles, videos and other resources you can consult to help manage the demands of work, family and children, and life in general.

Assaulted Women's Helpline (AWHL)

1-866-863-0511 | Text #SAFE

During this time of crisis and uncertainty, the Assaulted Women's Helpline (AWHL) remains committed to delivering 24/7 crisis counselling for women. You can also call 211 from any Toronto phone to access safe shelter and support information.

BounceBack

1-866-345-0224 | bouncebackontario.ca

With the guidance of a coach, you'll work through a series of workbooks at your own schedule to gain practical skills to better manage low mood, anxiety, worry or stress.

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

1-800-463-2338 | camh.ca

Find mental health and addiction resources and treatment.

Distress Centres of Greater Toronto 24/7 support

416-408-HELP(4357) | Text 45645

The centres offer a range of 24/7 programs for anyone in distress or in need of emotional support.

LifeSpeak

ttc.lifespeak.com (Click on "access through group account" and use the password: lifespeak)

Get tips on how to navigate the challenges of the pandemic through health and wellness webinars, videos and expert sessions. Content is updated weekly.

MindBeacon

mindbeacon.com

Access mental health support through live therapy sessions, guided programs, and self-help articles and tools.

Wellness Together Canada

ca.portal.gs | For immediate crisis support, text 741741 with the message “wellness” for adults or “frontline” for frontline workers

Access mental health (anxiety and stress) and substance use support, including one-on-one coaching, wellness self-assessments, self-guided courses, as well as online community support and coaching.

For updated information, check out the Occupational Health and Employee Wellbeing section of the MyTTC | SAP Jam app and MyTTC | Home. You can also contact the department directly at ohew@ttc.ca or 416-393-4578.

TTC employee COVID-19 return to work process flowchart and responsibility diagram



