



FACT SHEET

PHYSICAL DISTANCING and SOCIAL ISOLATION FOR HOME & COMMUNITY GENERAL GUIDANCE

- On March 11, 2020 the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic
- On March 17, 2020 the Government of Ontario declared a state of emergency in the province
- This guidance document was developed in order to provide health care professionals and the public recommendations for how to manage and limit the spread of COVID-19 in their personal lives

Physical Distancing (1): General Population Recommendations

To prevent the spread of the virus and the resulting overwhelming of our health care system, it is important that everyone do their best to not leave their homes for non-essential reasons.

We are joining a global chorus recommending physical distancing at this time, which is defined as remaining at least 6 feet apart from anyone you are not living with at home.

Do's and Don'ts:

DO:

- Remain at home unless you must go out for essentials. Send only one person to do this.
- Try to use delivery services or click-and-collect options (where groceries are ordered and brought to your car) for essential supplies.
- Only attend grocery stores or pharmacies at off peak hours as much as possible. If you see lines, leave and come back.
- Stay away from those who do not live with you. This includes extended family. Keep a minimum of 6 feet apart at all times.

DO NOT:

- Host or attend playdates for your children. Try FaceTime or Zoom to keep in touch with friends.
- Allow children to play on park equipment.

- Host or attend non-essential meetings.
- Attend in person at non-essential jobs insofar as your job permits this. We urge teleworking as much as possible.
- Host or attend family gatherings, including upcoming celebrations for Easter, Passover or any other religious holiday.
- Attend crowded shopping areas.
- Enter elevators if you cannot be 6 ft apart. Do not use your fingers/hands to touch elevator buttons

Mental Health Concerns

It is important to acknowledge that physical distancing can take a toll on your mental health.

Suggestions for minimizing this impact can be found at:

<https://www.apa.org/practice/programs/dmhi/research-information/social-distancing>

If you are struggling with your mental health, consider reaching out for assistance. ConnexOntario is available 24-7: 1-866-531-2600 or <https://www.connexontario.ca/> Connex is funded by the Government of Ontario and provides free and confidential health services information for people experiencing problems with alcohol and drugs, mental illness and/or gambling.

Q. What is the difference between self-isolation, social isolation, and physical distancing? It's confusing.

Self-isolation is the same as what people call “quarantine.” For those who have traveled, who have been exposed to COVID-19, or who have symptoms, **self-isolation** is recommended. This means remaining in your home and not leaving it, including for walks. In these cases, arrangements should be made for food and other essentials to be delivered, and for assistance with dog walking.

Social isolation is isolating from all individuals except those who live in your home. Total **social isolation** is recommended at this time for all elderly and immunocompromised individuals, and as much **social isolation** is possible is recommended for everyone else.

Physical distancing is remaining six feet away from all individuals who are not part of your household.

Q. Is it safe to go for walks?

A. Getting outside and getting exercise can be beneficial during this time if done safely. If you are under 65 and healthy, going out for walks should be safe permitted you maintain physical distancing practices, which means keeping a distance of at least 6 feet from others. If you see others coming, cross the street. This isn't the time to worry about being rude to your neighbours. Everyone should be taking extreme precautions to keep apart.

If you are over 65 or immunocompromised, we cannot recommend leaving the home unless it is essential. It is safer to remain indoors or outside in a contained space such as a backyard or balcony.

Q. Is it safe to have playdates?

A: We do not recommend having playdates at this time. We do not recommend any contact with individuals living outside of your home.

Q. Is it safe to take out or have food delivered?

A. For now, restaurants remain open for takeout and delivery. If physical distancing is maintained, this can be safely done. Delivery is safer than take out as it minimizes potential interactions. We recommend paying ahead and having the food dropped at the door so there is no interaction.

Q. Is it safe to have children play on playground equipment?

A. We recommend avoiding playground structures. There is evidence the virus can live on surfaces. As well, children are considered to be carriers and spreaders of the disease even when they do not get sick themselves.

Q. Can I still have my housekeeper/fitness trainer/nanny/nurse/therapist/contractor come into my home?

A. Some families will need to have individuals come into the home. To the extent possible, those going in and out of people's homes should try to limit the number of other individuals they encounter as much as possible. We recommend limiting people in the home to those who are essential. For non-essential individuals, consider a paid or unpaid leave or virtual sessions wherever possible. Please see here for information on EI for employers and employees affected by COVID-19.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>

Q. Are pets safe from the virus? My dog runs with other dogs in the off-leash park and I have an outdoor cat.

A. There is no evidence that pets pose a risk. Expert advice indicates pet related interactions may proceed as normal. Physical distancing from other humans in the dog park is recommended, as is holding off on non-essential/elective or routine pet care matters at the vet.

Q. Is it safer if I go out with a mask and/or gloves?

A. There is no evidence that this is useful. Moreover, there is a shortage of masks and other personal protective equipment for health care workers. Please, do not attempt to buy or hoard supplies. Stay home whenever possible, practice physical distancing, and wash your hands.

Q. I'm getting married in June. Should I cancel my wedding?

A. Unfortunately, we don't have a crystal ball. The best chance of things returning to normal is to practice physical distancing now.

Q. I've heard a few experts on TV and Twitter saying we are overreacting and that this is mass hysteria. I feel like they could be right. Aren't there usually this many cases of the flu? Why is there such a commotion?

A. The current measures in place are endorsed by an overwhelming majority of experts. This is a new virus. Unlike the flu, there is no vaccine and no basic immunity in the population. It is much more contagious, and, according to current data, much more deadly than the flu. The reason we need to practice these extreme measures is because if we don't, so many people will get sick at the same time. This means that there won't be enough hospital beds, medication, and equipment to help everyone.

Q. I don't understand how physical distancing helps. What does "flattening the curve" mean?

A. Physical distancing slows the spread of disease by minimizing the chances of infecting another person. If you're not interacting with others, you shouldn't get sick. Unfortunately, even physical distancing isn't perfect. Therefore, we know that some people will still spread disease in the community. However, it will be a much slower spread. This will allow hospitals to manage cases, restock supplies and allow time for infected hospital workers to recover. This will increase the chance that those infected will get the care they need and survive. If we don't socially distance now, people will get sick quicker. This will

overwhelm emergency rooms and intensive care units and many more people will die. This is what happened in Italy, which is, like Canada, a wealthy country with a high-quality public health care system.

The best explanation of the concept of flattening the curve is available here:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/world/corona-simulator/>

Q. Why does everyone have to do this? I read only old people get sick. This feels unfair. Can't they just stay home?

Recent data out of the US and Europe is showing a significant proportion of those requiring hospitalization are under 65, including the 20-59 age group. It is not just the elderly affected by this virus. As well, to flatten the curve properly, everyone must do their part now.

Physical Distancing (2): Health Care Providers-Interaction with loved ones

- Remove clothing and items that were used in the workplace and launder as soon as possible, store those dirty items in a separate location from those of loved ones. Consider this location to be contaminated and do not re-use with clean laundry.
- Wash your hands immediately upon entry to the home. Continue to maintain regular hand hygiene. Ensure all sinks in washrooms, kitchen, are well stocked with hand washing supplies.
- Disinfect surfaces of items that are shared (car surfaces, keys, electronic devices). See below for guidelines on how to clean and disinfect.
- Ensure that all food utensils, plates, cups, etc are cleaned and disinfected, limit sharing.
- Isolate yourself if you begin to exhibit COVID-19 symptoms.

Physical Distancing (3): Social Isolation Recommended for High Risk Individuals (Immunocompromised, Chronic Medical Conditions & Elderly)

- Stay home: we strongly recommend social isolation and remaining indoors as much as possible, indefinitely
 - Consider ways of getting food brought to your house through family, social, or commercial networks
- Have supplies on hand
 - Contact your healthcare provider to ask about obtaining extra necessary medications to have on hand in case there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in your community and you need to stay home for a prolonged period of time
 - If you cannot get extra medications, consider asking your pharmacy for medications to be delivered

- Be sure you have over-the-counter medicines and medical supplies (tissues, etc.) to treat fever and other symptoms. Most people will be able to recover from COVID-19 at home. Have these delivered to you if at all possible.
- Have enough household items and groceries on hand so that you will be prepared to stay at home for a period of time.
- Have a plan for if you get sick:
 - **Consult with your health care provider for more information about** monitoring your health for symptoms suggestive of COVID-19.
 - Stay in touch with others by phone or email. You may need to ask for help from friends, family, neighbors, community health workers, etc. if you become sick.
 - Determine who can provide you with care if your caregiver gets sick

Adapted from the CDC's document on "[People at Risk for Serious Illness from COVID-19](#)"

Travel

It is recommended that you refrain from any travel.

If travel is considered essential:

Prior to Travel

There are several active travel health notices for COVID-19. Before you leave check the [Government of Canada's Travel advice page](#).

During your return to Canada

If you develop symptoms of coronavirus before you leave, do **not** get on board any form of public transportation. Seek medical attention.

If you experience symptoms of COVID-19 during a flight, tell the flight attendant before you land or the border services officer as you enter the country. They will notify a quarantine officer who will assess your symptoms.

If you do not have symptoms but believe you were exposed to a source of COVID-19, report this information to a Canada border services agent on arrival in Canada.

During the 14 days after your return

The current requirement is that you self-quarantine for 14 days on return after any out-of-country travel due to the high number of impacted countries across the world.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19, isolate yourself at home as quickly as possible and contact Telehealth or consult the Ministry of Health [website](#). Describe your symptoms and document your travel history.

Adapted from Health Canada's document on "[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel advice](#)"

Other General Recommendations to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

Everyone is encouraged to practice the following hygiene principles:

- Wash your hands frequently (for 20 seconds)
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (min. 60% alcohol content)
- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve or a tissue (wash clothes frequently)
- Stay at home when you are sick
- Disinfect spaces regularly, and pay attention to high-touch surfaces (such as printers, desks, phones, kitchen appliances, door handles, etc.)

If you develop COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, difficulty breathing), self-isolate. Self-assessment guidance for what to do is available on the Ministry of Health [website](#). The self-assessment will direct you to Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000), or to virtually contact your family physician, nurse practitioner, family practice clinic, or your [local public health unit](#).

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Surfaces

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. If reusable gloves are used, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other purposes. Consult the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfection products used. [Clean hands](#) immediately after gloves are removed.
- If surfaces are visibly dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
 - Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
 - Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
 - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
 - [Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims](#) are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the

manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).

- For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
 - Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely, or
 - Use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims (examples at [this link](#)) that are suitable for porous surfaces.

Clothing, towels, linens and other items that go in the laundry

- Wear disposable gloves when handling dirty laundry from an ill person and then discard after each use. If using reusable gloves, those gloves should be dedicated for cleaning and disinfection of surfaces for COVID-19 and should not be used for other household purposes. [Clean hands](#) immediately after gloves are removed.
 - If no gloves are used when handling dirty laundry, be sure to wash hands afterwards.
 - If possible, do not shake dirty laundry. This will minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
 - Launder items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry from an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
 - Clean and disinfect clothes hampers according to guidance above for surfaces. If possible, consider placing a bag liner that is either disposable (can be thrown away) or can be laundered.

From the CDC's document on "[Clean & Disinfect](#)"