

# Workplace Health & Safety

Resources to maintain a healthy workplace for your employees and customers.



## What do I need to know as a Business Owner?

There is no blueprint for how to be a Small Business owner during a pandemic. Here's how to take the initial steps to re-opening your business safely.

## How do I maintain a safe & healthy workplace during COVID-19?

Create a workplace where both employees and customers can feel safe. Here's how to keep your workplace clean, disinfected and reduce the risk of spread.

## Mental Health Resources

It is a stressful time to be a small business owner. As you take safety measures to maintain your physical health, ensure you're also being mindful of your mental health.

## What do I need to know as an Employee?

Whether you're a business owner or an employee, we all need to play our part to keep the workplace safe.

## Implementing a Remote Work Policy

Teleworking or Working Remotely is one way some businesses are decreasing the risk of COVID-19. Here are our tips on implementing remote work that keeps your employees healthy, productive and engaged.



## Business Owner

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### How do I keep my employees safe?

Occupational Health and Safety requires employers to provide a safe workplace for their employees, but regulations differ by province. For guidance on your obligations as an employer, please reference your provincial regulations on workplace health and safety.

### How do I keep my customers or clients safe?

Adjusting policies to promote physical distancing and increasing the frequency of disinfecting and cleaning the workspace. Depending on your business, you may want to implement curbside pick up, require the use of masks or additional physical distancing equipment.

### What policies can I implement to reduce exposure and spread of COVID-19?

According to the World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control and the Canadian Government, you may want to implement the following policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- Increase communication to staff and clients about COVID-19
- Encourage frequent handwashing, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and staying home when ill.
- Consider having employees and clients wear a non-medical mask or face covering.
- Provide options to the medically at risk to reduce social contacts at work, included remote work.
- Increase frequency of cleaning especially of high traffic areas.
- If possible, make alternate plans for business travel and teleworking .
- Prepare to institute policies for flexible work and leave for employees who are sick, in self-isolation or who are caring for family members and/or children.

For more information, visit the Government of Canada Website on Guidelines for COVID-19 in the Workplace. [Visit Page](#)

### **What if someone in my workplace gets sick?**

Consider implementing an attendance/sick leave policy and communicate to your employees what the expectations are should they become ill. Per Occupational Health and Safety requirements, sick employees should be sent home to quarantine and will be able to apply for EI sick leave. You may need to speak to your local or provincial public health authority to determine if you should temporarily shut down your business.

For more information, visit the Canadian Federation of Independent Business' guidance. [Visit Page](#)

### **What do I need to know about high-risk employees or vulnerable workers?**

Certain demographics including older adults or individuals with compromised immune systems could be at greater risk if they contracted COVID-19. For their safety, consider implementing the following policies:

- Increase communication to staff about your company's policies and risks
- Encourage frequent handwashing, physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and staying home when ill.
- Consider having employees and clients wear non-medical masks or face coverings.
- If possible, implement a remote work policy.

For more information, visit the Government of Canada's guidance on informed risk decision making in the workplace. [Visit Page](#)



## Employee

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### Your rights as an employee.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employers have to take precautions to keep workers safe. As a worker, you also have the right to refuse unsafe work. For health and safety information by province, please visit your provincial work safety website.

### Important Links

<https://www.alberta.ca/guidance-for-workplaces.aspx>

<https://www.worksafebc.com/>

<https://safemanitoba.com/>

<https://www.worksafenb.ca/>

<https://www.workplacenl.ca/>

<https://www.wscn.nt.ca/>

<https://www.gov.ns.ca/lae/ohs/>

<https://novascotia.ca/lael/healthandsafety/>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-labour-training-skills-development>

<https://www.wcb.pe.ca>

<https://www.csst.qc.ca/en/>

<https://www.worksafesask.ca>

<https://wcb.yk.ca>



## Maintaining a Healthy Workplace

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### How to clean and disinfect

Health Canada recommends cleaning and disinfecting daily, using hard-surface disinfectant products approved by Health Canada and with an identifiable Drug Identification Number (DIN). In addition, it is recommended to use damp cleaning methods such as damp clean cloths, and/or a wet mop and to avoid dusting or sweeping which could distribute the virus into the air through droplets. Place contaminated disposable cleaning items in a lined garbage bin before disposing them. For cleaning items that are re-usable or need to be laundered, use regular laundry soap and hot water between 60-90 degrees celcius. For more information on implementing procedures and how to clean and disinfect, visit the [Canada Public Health website](#).

### What is the difference between cleaning and disinfecting?

Cleaning removes germs, dirt and impurities from surfaces. While it kill germs in their entirety, it reduces the number and lowers risk for infection. Disinfecting, kills germs on surfaces.

### Which areas should be cleaned and disinfected?

High traffic areas and frequently touched surfaces require the most frequent attention. These could include doorknobs, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, breakroom appliances, cash registers, electronics, etc.

### Which areas should I prioritise for cleaning?

Shared spaces such as kitchens and bathrooms should be cleaned more often.

### How often should I clean?

Frequent and regular cleaning is recommend to reduce the risk of COVID-19. In addition to regular cleaning, increase the frequency of communal areas and frequently touched surfaces.

### **What if there is a case of COVID-19 in my workplace?**

If someone in your workplace should become sick, please follow the advice of your local Public Health Authority on next steps. [Visit Page](#)

### **How often should I disinfect?**

Evidence suggests that COVID-19 can live on surfaces for a few hours to days. Frequent cleaning of surfaces that people come into contact with is recommended daily, and increased frequency for high-traffic areas.

### **Does every surface need to be cleaned?**

Covid-19 is transmitted by breathing in droplets produced by an infected person coughing or sneezing, or who has come into contact with contaminated surfaces. Therefore you need to increase the frequency of surfaces that people come into contact with purposely or incidentally.

### **Do I need to clean areas or equipment daily if no one has entered the area or used the equipment recently?**

Evidence suggests that COVID-19 can live on surfaces for a few hours to days. The need to clean will depend on who has come into contact with it and when the equipment or surface was last cleaned.

### **What about workers' personal items?**

Every workplace should develop communication to instruct employees on how to clean personal items or personal spaces such as office, cubicles and lockers.

### **What are the best products for cleaning and disinfecting?**

Use approved hard-surface disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). These items have been approved by Health Canada as effective and safe disinfectants.

### **Is a sanitiser a disinfectant?**

Hand Sanitiser is designed to kill bacteria on skin. These chemicals are not as strong as DIN approved disinfectants which makes them safe to use skin. DIN approved products are recommended to kill germs on hard-surfaces.

### **Will an antibacterial product kill COVID-19?**

Covid-19 is a virus and not a bacteria and thus will antibacteria products are not effective.

### **Should I be using hospital grade disinfectant for normal cleaning in the workplace?**

Health Canada has approved DIN certified products as suitable to disinfect and clean hard surfaces in the workplace.

### **Are there any cleaning methods I shouldn't use?**

Avoid using pressurised water, pressurised air, dry cloth and dusters which may disperse the virus instead of cleaning and disinfecting.

### **How do I clean linen, crockery and cutlery?**

Items should be laundered according to manufacturers instructions using the warmest settings possible. Cutlery and Cookery should be washed using warm water and soap, or a dishwasher.



## Remote Work

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### **What must I do when workers are working from home?**

Worker's Health and Safety is provincially regulated and may differ by province. For more information on your responsibility to your remote work employees, please visit your provincial workers' health and safety website.

### **Mental health risks and working from home.**

For many people working-from-home will not be business as usual. Working from home during COVID-19 can come with many hardships, including: social isolation, juggling both kids and/or partners sharing the same workspace, and stress due to changing work environments, routine and sometimes workloads.

If you can, maintain normalcy where possible. Check in with your team through email and platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Slack. Encourage your employees to take lunch breaks, set up virtual coffee, happy hours, or "watercooler talk". Most of all, be understanding that these unusual circumstances require flexibility and understanding from both you and your employees.

### **Who is responsible for ensuring that my workers have a safe workstation set up to work from home?**

According to the CCOHS a home office should offer the same level of safety and security, as the workplace would. It is important that you maintain an open line of communication with your employees for them to identify deficits in safety and wellness.

This could include lack of access to an improper workstation or tools to perform their job, difficulties with mental or physical health, or potential deficits in cyber security.



### **What do I need to do about home workstation set ups?**

For an ergonomically friendly work station at home (or at the office), you should focus on the following 4 factors :

- Ensuring you are maintaining a good posture through a supportive chair, arm rests, foot rests, and distance from your keyboard and monitor.
- Ensure your monitor is at an appropriate distance, at eye level and at an appropriate brightness.
- Keep your wrists straight, shoulders supported and elbows by your side by ensuring you have adequate support for your wrists at your keyboard and while using a mouse.
- Ensure you have proper lighting.

If you use a phone for work, ensure you have headphones or a headset so you are not straining your neck to hold the phone. For more information on setting up an ergonomically friendly workstation, visit our Working and Learning Blog. [Visit Page](#)

### **Am I required to provide my workers with equipment to enable them to work safely from home?**

Employees should have access to the equipment they require to reasonably do their job, and do so safely.

### **What are my obligations to my workers to ensure that they have suitable breaks and work reasonable hours while working from home?**

While the specific regulations vary by province, the general guideline is: working from home or remotely, should offer the same level of safety employees would receive at the office. The same would pertain to standard working hours and breaks. For more information on guidelines for your province, visit your provincial workers' health and safety website.

## How can I support my workers who are finding working from home stressful and it is negatively impacting their mental health?

Working from home can come with negative aspects including: isolation and feelings of detachment, difficulties with communication and technology, interruptions, etc. Ensure that you encourage your employees to be communicative about their needs and difficulties and that you create a culture of communication that supports them. These could include implementing initiatives like:

- Daily team phone or video calls
- Increased team meetings
- Increased communication from leadership
- Encourage them to maintain a work/life balance
- Encourage breaks at regular intervals throughout the day

Here's a fun and relaxing break you can share with your employees to implement when they're feeling overwhelmed or need to disconnect for a few minutes.

<https://www.staples.ca/a/learn/dont-get-up-6-key-chair-yoga-poses>

## Can I direct my workers back to the usual workplace?

You can direct your workers back to the workplace if it is consistent with your local Public Health Authority's instruction. However, in doing so, you should ensure that you are taking the proper measures to decrease risk of COVID-19 in the workplace and complying to safety instructions about social distancing, cleaning and disinfecting and personal protective equipment. Keep in mind, employees have the right to refuse work that is unsafe, so proper implementation of procedures and communication is vital.

## Where can employers get more information on working from home?

Small Business owners looking to find information setting up ergonomic workstations, increasing productivity and employee engagement while at home can visit more resources on our Working and Learning Blog.



## Mental Health

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### **I feel very anxious and stressed what can I do?**

It's normal to feel stressed, anxious, and angry about COVID-19 and uncertainty ahead. That's why more than ever, it's important to take care of your mental and emotional well being with the following strategies recommended by the Government of Canada:

- Physical Distancing, does not mean Social Distancing. Use the power and innovation of technology to connect with friends, family and other business owners through email, phone, video calls and social media.
- Stay Active through exercise, stretching, and meditation.
- Ensure you are maintaining work/life balance.
- Eat healthily, get adequate sleep, and be positive

If you are feeling overwhelmed, or your feelings of sadness and worry escalate, reach out to your family, friends or health care professionals.

You can receive immediate support from social workers, psychologists and other professionals by texting WELLNESS to 741741.

### **My workers are worried about catching coronavirus. What should I do?**

Talk to your workers, understand their concerns and implement both recommended and reasonable measures to eliminate those concerns. Ensure communication about what you are doing to maintain a healthy workplace and protect your employees is frequently and visibly communicated. Ensure your employees have access to the recommended protective equipment as well as health and safety products to do their job.

### **My staff are working from home. How do I look after their mental health?**

For many people working-from-home will not be business as usual. Working from home during COVID-19 can come with many hardships, including: social isolation, juggling both kids and/or partners sharing the same workspace, and stress due to changing work environments, routine and sometimes workloads.

If you can, maintain normalcy where possible. Check in with your team through email and platforms like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Slack. Encourage your employees to take lunch breaks, set up virtual coffee, happy hours, or "watercooler talk". Most of all, be understanding that these unusual circumstances require flexibility and understanding from both you and your employees.

### **Further information and support**

For further information and support, visit:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/mental-health.html>