

What is 'Social Distancing'?

Social distancing involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with. Social distancing guidelines workplaces should be put in place to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Why are social distancing measures being considered?

Social distancing measures are used to reduce contact between people. This limits opportunities for transmission of diseases and can reduce the spread and impact of communicable illnesses, such as COVID-19.

In the case of COVID-19, social distancing measures are being considered for the following reasons:

COVID-19 can be spread through close contact (within two metres or six feet).

- Unlike seasonal influenza, the time that a person can be infectious and transmit COVID-19 is much longer.
- Individuals infected with COVID-19 may be able to transmit the virus before they start to show symptoms and take precautions like self-isolating.
- Using social distancing can delay and minimize the peak in COVID-19 cases to help manage the impact on the health care system.

Social Distancing For Everybody

We are all encouraged to:

- Avoid using public transportation during rush-hour crowding (walk, cycle, or drive a car whenever possible). Alternatively, if possible, adjust your schedule to commute early or late to avoid rush-hour crowding on public transportation.
- Avoid recreational or other leisure classes, meetings, or activities where you might come into contact with contagious people.
- Avoid handshaking as a means of greeting. Possible alternatives may include using a slight bow, elbow bump or toe kick when greeting others.
- Use only your knuckle to touch light switches, elevator buttons, etc.
- When opening doors (especially bathroom or other public area doors) or touching other public surfaces, use a paper towel, tissue or disposable glove.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer when handwashing is not possible.
- Use general surface cleaning products or wipes to clean commonly touched surfaces.

Social Distancing for Workplaces

Reduce number of contacts

- Avoid meeting people face-to-face. Use the telephone, online conferencing, e-mail or instant messaging to conduct business as much as possible, even when participants are in the same building.
- Keep at least 2 metres distance between people and limit interactions to 10 minutes or less.
- If a face-to-face meeting is unavoidable, the meeting time should be for a minimum period of time, in a large meeting room and participants should sit at least 2 metres/ 6 feet from each other.
- Limit the number of customers/clients your employees would have close contact with (e.g. fewer scheduled appointments, limited number of clients in a store at any one time).
- Telework/ Work from home: Whenever appropriate, teleworking/work from home arrangements should be made, on a temporary basis.
- Encourage customers/clients/patients to request information and materials or place orders via phone and e-mail to minimize person-to-person contact. When items or materials must be collected in person, have them ready for fast pick-up or delivery.
- Postpone or cancel events with more than 50 people.
- Avoid unnecessary travel for business or pleasure. Cancel or postpone any such travel, as well as nonessential meetings, gatherings, workshops and training sessions.
- Notify customers/clients of the social distancing measures you are taking by posting these on the front door

Schedule Shifts & Adjust Hours of Operation

- Stagger working hours to reduce number of employees at common spaces such as entrances/exits, elevators, cafeterias, etc. and allow employees to commute to and from work at off-peak hours. For example, if the normal working hours are from 9 am to 5 pm, employers can stagger start times at one-hour intervals between 7:30 am and 10:30 am, with corresponding staggered timings for end of work. Timings of lunch and other breaks can also be staggered.
- Implement shift work in settings where shifts are not already in place, and extend hours of operation. Employers should ensure separation of employees on different shifts, and increase cleaning of common areas during shift changeovers.
- Limit hours of operation

Increase space & distance

- Increase the spatial separation between desks and workstations as well as individuals (e.g., employees, customers) from each other, ideally a 2 metre separation should be maintained, unless there is a physical barrier (e.g., cubicle, Plexiglas window).
- Increase the space between employees and customers/clients at counters by using physical barriers.
- Offer virtual or live-streamed programs, services, and activities.
- Do not congregate in work rooms, lunchrooms, copier rooms or other areas where people socialize.
- Eat at your desk or away from others. Bring your lunch or purchase take-out meals.

Hygiene & Housekeeping

- Avoid person-to-person contact such as shaking hands.
- Ensure adequate handwashing facilities are readily available. Provide tissues, hand soap, hand sanitizer and no-touch trash cans throughout the workplace.
- Discourage employees from using other employees' phones, desks, offices or other work tools and equipment.
- Remind employees to avoid sharing cups, glasses, dishes or cutlery, and ensure cups/glasses/dishes/cutlery are thoroughly cleaned using soap and warm water after each use, or placed in the dishwasher for cleaning.
- Remove magazines, papers, and other objects that cannot be cleaned from common rooms such as cafeterias, kitchens, break rooms, and waiting areas.