COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Public Washrooms

Guidance for Public Washrooms

July 30, 2020

Public washrooms are essential facilities in our communities, especially as the weather improves and public spaces begin to open. Since public washrooms can be used by anyone, precautions will be needed given the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 transmission can occur when people are in close proximity to one another. The virus is spread through droplets or by touching a surface infected with COVID-19. Since the virus has been found in feces, some changes in public washrooms may be necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The following mitigation guidelines can be used to reduce the risk of contracting respiratory infections, including COVID-19.

On July 30, 2020, Southwestern Public Health issued a letter of instruction to businesses to implement mandatory face coverings in all enclosed public spaces in Oxford County, Elgin County and the City of St. Thomas. Here are additional details and FAQ about this Letter of Instruction.

Guidelines for using public washrooms

Reduce the risk of transmission:
- Stay home if you are feeling unwell. Complete the self-assessment tool at www.covid19checkup.ca/ and get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Do not visit public washrooms when feeling unwell.
- Assess your risk. If you are over the age of 70 or have a chronic health condition you are encouraged to stay home to reduce your risk.
- Wear a face covering. Face coverings are now mandatory inside enclosed public spaces including public washrooms.
- Practice Physical Distancing (2 metres) when in line and using the public washroom

- Respect all Provincial Emergency Orders that prohibit social gatherings of a certain size, including when within or outside a public washroom
- Practice proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue, immediately throw out the tissue and wash your hands)
- When possible, use electronic push buttons or sensors to open doors, turn on sinks and flush toilets
- Upon entering and leaving a public washroom, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds
- Try to minimize contact with frequently touched surfaces as much as possible
- Avoid touching your face, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- If you start to experience symptoms of COVID-19, go home and self-isolate immediately, and contact your local health unit.

Guidelines for maintaining public washrooms

- Post signage at the entrance indicating that all persons entering or remaining inside an enclosed public space must wear a face covering.
- Post signage on proper hand hygiene.
- Ensure paper towels and soap are well stocked and restocked often in washrooms
- Support Physical Distancing:
  - Place floor markers 2 metres (6 foot) apart in busier washrooms
  - Post maximum occupancy signs to ensure physical distancing can be maintained
  - Tape off sinks and/or urinals that are not able to meet the 2 metre (6 foot) distancing requirements
- Clean and disinfect regularly:
  - Ensure washrooms are thoroughly cleaned prior to opening for the season
  - All high touched areas/surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected at least 2 times per day
    - This includes door handles, sink taps, toilet handles, stall doors/locks, etc.
  - The frequency of cleaning and disinfection may need to be increases dependent on the amount of use. Please refer to the Public Health Ontario Guidance Document on Environmental Cleaning for further guidance.

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o Create a cleaning protocol to ensure that the public washroom is kept in a clean and sanitary manner and is well stocked.

Additional Resources

Guidance for Universal Masking for Priority Populations (SWPH)

For more information on COVID-19 please visit the Southwestern Public Health website

COVID-19 Public Health Principles for Public Spaces (SWPH)