

Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic

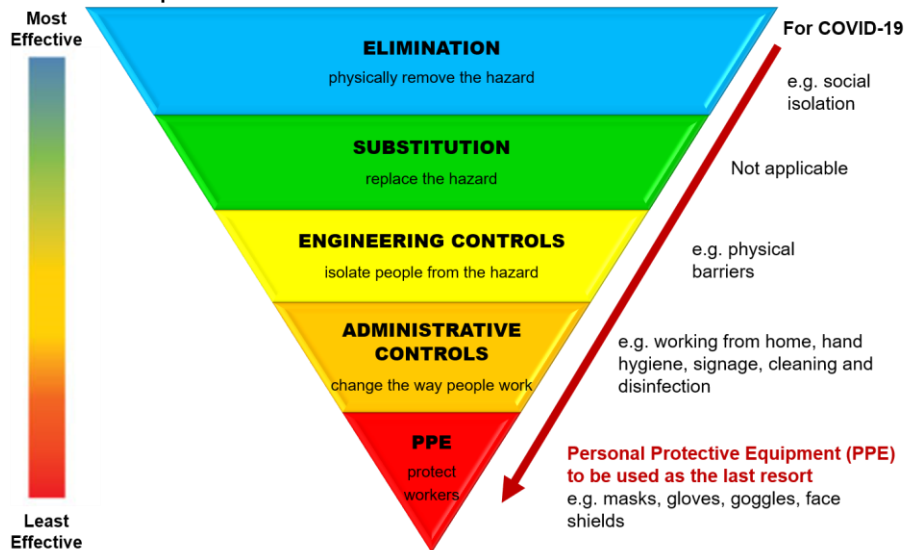
As departments and faculties begin to make their plans to return all/part of their areas to York’s campuses and locations during the COVID-19 pandemic, this guidance document can be used to develop safe work procedures in areas that will be occupied (e.g., classrooms, washrooms, residence spaces, offices, research/lab spaces and other public areas within York campuses). This document should be used as a guide to complete the *COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment Form* by area management in consultation with Joint Health and Safety Committees and employees (where applicable) to develop specific procedures as part of continuity and resumption planning. Regular reviews of health and safety procedures (including conversations between area management and employees following them) should take place to ensure ongoing effectiveness. Management supervisors may contact their area’s Health and Safety Officer and/or the Health and Safety Advisor for assistance at any point.

Spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 is known to be transmitted from humans to humans. The primary routes of transmission are by respiratory droplets and/or contact with contaminated surfaces or items.

Hierarchy of Controls

The application of the Hierarchy of Controls (i.e. elimination, substitution engineering, administrative, then personal protective equipment [PPE]) is a recognized approach to containment of hazards, where the levels of control at the highest (elimination and substitution) are considered the most effective at mitigating the risk of exposures, compared to the lowest level of control (i.e. between the worker and the hazard, such as PPE). This fundamental method for protecting workers will be applied where feasible. It is important to know that PPE is the least effective in protection and should always be used only when other options are not available.



In addition to the hierarchy of controls, outlined below are some general strategies:

General Strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Stay at home sick
- Follow the recommendations of the government and the public health agencies regarding self-monitoring and self-isolation
- Maintain a physical distance by keeping a distance of at least two (2) metres from others or using a barrier
- Frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces. Enhanced cleaning protocols will be put in place for areas returning to campus
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands
- Frequent handwashing with soap and water
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when handwashing facilities are unavailable
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or into your sleeves. Dispose of used facial tissues immediately. If you do not have a facial tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow
- Speak to your Management/Supervisor for tasks that may require PPE (e.g., surgical masks, face shields, goggles)
- As an additional measure, non-medical mouth and nose covers may also be used, as recommended by Health Canada (see section on non-medical mouth and nose covers below), in cases where physical distancing is not possible
- Non-medical mouth and nose covers alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. Employees must consistently and strictly adhere to good hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical distancing.

Note on non-medical mouth and nose covers

Wearing a non-medical mouth and nose cover is another way to prevent your respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. A non-medical mouth and nose cover can reduce the chance that others come into contact with your respiratory droplets. The Public Health Agency of Canada stated that “For short periods of time when physical distancing is not possible in public settings (e.g., grocery shopping, in close settings such as public transit), wearing a non-medical [mouth and nose cover] is one way to protect those around you.”

Using a non-medical mouth and nose cover alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is an extra step that can protect others around you. It is critical to continue to follow public health measures as described above in General Strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Wearing a non-medical mouth and nose cover has not been proven to protect an individual wearing it, as it is **not considered PPE**. However, employees who wear non-medical mouth and nose covers can reduce the chance of spreading respiratory droplets to others, just like coughing into your sleeve or into a tissue.

It is important to understand that non-medical mouth and nose covers have limitations and need to be used safely. If an employee chooses to use non-medical mouth and nose covers, they should:

- Wash their hands before putting it on and immediately after taking it off
- Avoid touching their face (eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands
- Ensure the cover fits well to enable the air flows through the mask and not around it
- Not share their mask with others
- Ensure the cover is washed after use.

Non-medical mouth and nose covers should not be used by anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Non-medical mouth and nose covers are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms.

The information sheet which provides instructions for wearing, removing and cleaning non-medical mouth and nose covers can be found on HSEWB's [COVID-19 - Employee Resources page](#).

Health and Safety Procedures

- Pre-existing procedures surrounding the use of PPE will continue based on the activities that are usually conducted (e.g., research, handling chemicals, etc.)
- Staff should follow existing PPE protocols for performing tasks (e.g., contact with people experiencing homelessness on campus, security responding to medical calls, contact with animals for research)
- Staff should follow standard operating procedures and label directions for all cleaning products and other chemicals used for disinfection in their respective area(s)
- COVID-19 spreads by respiratory droplets of an infected person to others with whom they have been in close contact with. For infection prevention and control purposes, **droplet precautions** are required. Droplet precautions for tasks performed at York include:
 - If able to maintain physical distance of at least 2 metres or separation by physical barrier, **no PPE is required**
 - Staff should wash their hands regularly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds; where this isn't possible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer comprised of at least 60% alcohol
 - Disposable gloves are only necessary when required as part of standard operating procedures or as part of the droplet precautions described for cleaning and disinfecting and Security Services below. Disposable gloves can be a source of cross contamination and a false sense of security; hand hygiene such as frequent washing and use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the best option for proper infection prevention and control
- Where procedures are developed specific COVID-19, training and education needs to be provided to applicable staff and faculty, including the safe use of PPE

For **labs, studios/shops and other types of work/study/research spaces**, pre-existing procedures surrounding the use of PPE will continue based on the activities that are usually conducted. Additional and/or alternate COVID-19 plans that have been put in place by the areas/faculty/departments should also be followed to ensure added precautions for health and safety of personnel. Refer to *Employee Return to Campus Checklist for Labs/Research/Machine Shops* for further details.

For **shared office spaces**, a COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment will need to be conducted by Management Supervisors to ensure proper health and safety measures have been put in place.

For **cleaning and disinfecting**, N95 respirators are not required. N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings

- When Facilities staff are cleaning the area/surfaces associated with a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case, gloves and disposable coveralls must be used. Surgical masks are optional but are not required, and manufacturer instructions must be followed for donning and doffing PPE.

For **Security Services**:

- Follow existing PPE protocols for responding to medical calls
- If unable to maintain physical distance during contact with individual suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 wear disposable gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shield) and a surgical mask
- The individual suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 should be instructed to wear a surgical mask
- An N95 respirator is not required but may be worn if the user is clean-shaven and fit-tested. Where N95 respirators are used, York's Respiratory Protection Program must be followed

Handwashing/Hand sanitizing

Handwashing remains the single most effective way of preventing transmission and protecting individuals from respiratory viruses, including COVID-19. Proper handwashing helps prevent the transfer of the COVID-19 virus from surface to surface, and from contaminated surfaces or materials to the hands and subsequently to other parts of the body – particularly the eyes, nose and mouth.

Employees are reminded to wash their hands frequently with soap and water, thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds, scrubbing the backs of the hands, between the fingers and under the fingernails. Dry hands completely afterward. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when handwashing facilities are unavailable.

Hand sanitizer will be provided by York University in high traffic, public circulation areas such as elevator lobbies and outside washrooms, as determined by risk assessment in approved space use on campus. It is encouraged that community members carry a personal supply of hand sanitizer if they intend to use it in other spaces on campus.

Cleaning and Disinfection (common/shared surfaces, equipment/tools)

Shared environmental surfaces in non-health care settings include commonly touched surfaces such as sinks/faucets, toilets, electronics (computers and peripherals e.g., printers, keyboards, mice, touch screens and controls), equipment (e.g., tools, machines), furniture and other fixed items, such as counter tops, stairway rails, floors, elevators and walls. Cleaning of shared environmental surfaces will be determined by area management.

Overview of Controls

- Proper hand washing is the most effective way in preventing the transfer of the COVID-19 virus from surface to surface, from the contaminated surface or material to the hands and then to other parts of the body, particularly the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoiding or reduction in sharing of tools/equipment (where possible) is considered the most effective control measure. Where this is not possible, cleaning/disinfecting the hand tools/equipment that workers will be touching will add another layer of protection. This is particularly important when tools are shared. Hand hygiene is critical in this area as well. Specific details on tool/machine sharing and cleaning will be determined by the area management, as per the risk assessment.
- Always wash your hands before touching your face or eating, or getting into your vehicle to go home, regardless of other precautions taken.
- Disinfectant solutions must be prepared and used according to the manufacturer's recommendations for concentration, volume and contact time.
- Products used for cleaning and disinfection should follow manufacturers' recommendations and safety data sheet when preparing and handling safely, and appropriate PPE should be used to avoid chemical exposures.

More information can be found in WHO's Interim Guidance Document on Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces in the context of COVID-19 and IHSA'S Guidance on Tool Sharing-Constructor/Employer Procedure during COVID-19

Reference and Other Resources

- Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being, [Respiratory Protection Program](#)
- Govern of Canada COVID-19 Website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- Public Health Ontario, Updated IPAC recommendations for use of personal protective equipment for care of individuals with suspect or confirmed COVID-19. Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/updated-ipac-measures-covid-19.pdf?la=en>
- Public Health Ontario, Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings (11 Mar 2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>
- Toronto Public Health, IPAC Practice and Disinfection Guidance for Commercial or Residential Buildings (12 March 2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/8ecd-General-Infection-Prevention-and-Control-Practice-and-Disinfection-Guidance-for-Commercial-or-Residential-Buildings.pdf>
- York University website, <https://coronavirus.info.yorku.ca/>

- WHO Interim Guidance Document on Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces in the context of COVID-19. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/cleaning-and-disinfection-of-environmental-surfaces-inthe-context-of-covid-19>
- Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA), Guidance on Tool Sharing (Hand Tools) Constructor/Employer Procedure during COVID-19: <https://www.ihsa.ca/pdfs/alerts/COVID19/guidance-on-tool-sharing-constructor-employer-procedure-during-covid-19.pdf>

Referenced documents

Employee Return to Campus Checklist for Labs/Research/Machine Shops
COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment Form