

PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR USE OF PUBLIC WASHROOMS

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Public washrooms are important facilities in our communities as the weather improves and public spaces are permitted for use by the public. Depending on where they are located, they can be busy. Therefore, precautions are needed given the risks of COVID-19.

COVID-19 transmission can occur when people are within close proximity to one another through the spread of droplets or through shared contact with surfaces. The COVID-19 virus has also been found in feces. As a result, some changes in practice and equipment may be necessary. As one of the most important actions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is handwashing, the benefits of accessing a washroom to facilitate this action far outweighs the potential risks. As a result, it is recommend that washrooms be opened where the following protective measures can be put in place:

Support Proper Hand Hygiene

- Post signage on [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) at sinks.
- Ensure that soap and paper towels are always available and are refilled frequently to ensure the public can practice proper hand hygiene.
- Paper towels are preferred in public washrooms during COVID-19. Though no studies have pointed to COVID-19 being transmitted through electric air dryers, some studies show that air dryers can spread bacteria.
- Hands-free sinks and paper towel dispensers are preferred to avoid the use of handles which reduces high touch surfaces in washrooms. If hands-free appliances cannot be installed, more frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces is required.
- Hand sanitizer should be made available where possible at the entrance/exit of the washroom.

Support Physical Distancing

- Post physical distancing signage outside and inside the washroom in case of lineups.
- Floor markers to designate 2 m (6 foot) spacing may be advisable in busier washrooms.
- Post maximum occupancy signs to further enhance physical distancing.
- Some urinals and sink basins may need to be decommissioned (taped off) if 2 m (6 foot) spacing cannot be maintained in the current set up.

Other Precautions

- Place signage in each stall instructing users to flush the toilet with the lid down, if applicable.
- Ventilation in the facility should be maximized.

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Cleaning and Disinfecting the Facility

- Frequent [cleaning \(including garbage\) and disinfection](#) should take place, especially in commonly touched areas/surfaces. The frequency of the cleaning and disinfection is dependent on the use of the facility.
- Baby change tables may be used and will require frequent cleaning and disinfection.

Portable Toilets

- Post signage on [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) at sinks.
- Post physical distancing signage outside the portable toilet in case of lineups.
- Increase cleaning protocols and service intervals.
- To ensure physical distancing, the number of portable toilets may need to be increased.
- Operators should ensure hand sanitizer is available and frequently refilled.

Resources:

[COVID-19 and outdoor safety: Considerations for use of outdoor recreational spaces](#)

[Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

[Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\) Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces](#)

References:

The Hygienic Efficacy of Different Hand-Drying Methods: A Review of the Evidence

Adapted with permission from Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

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