

May 1, 2021

Dear Business Owners and Workplaces,

In the past few weeks, we have seen a surge in new cases, and many have been linked to workplace exposure. In addition, we have seen an increase in variants of concern (VOC), which has been associated with an increase in transmissibility as well as an increase in severity of illness from COVID-19 infection.

Under the current stay-at-home order, all employees who can work from home must do so. If workers must attend in-person, we are asking you to [update your safety plan](#) and to use virtual meeting options as often as possible. While all components of the plan are important, we strongly suggest you reinforce screening measures, improve ventilation, and upgrade personal protective equipment (PPE).

**We no longer consider plexiglass barriers or cloth masks alone to be sufficient PPE.** A plexiglass barrier does not replace the need for a mask. If a worker is exposed to COVID-19 and has insufficient protection, they are at a greater risk of getting COVID-19. They will be considered a high-risk contact and required to self-isolate for 14 days.

### Screening:

We strongly recommend that you continue to actively screen your employees every day. They can complete the screening online <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/screening/worker/> or you can download the pdf <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/download-covid-19-screenings#2.-worker-and-employee-screening>. Employees must stay home if not feeling well, get tested, and self-isolate until test results are received.

### Ventilation Recommendations:

The risk of COVID-19 transmission is higher in enclosed and crowded spaces. You should ensure that air-handling (HVAC) systems are maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions and

Head Office:  
169 Pine Street South  
Postal Bag 2012  
Timmins, ON P4N 8B7

Phone: 705 267 1181  
Fax: 705 264 3980  
Toll Free: 800 461 1818

E-mail: [info4you@porcupinehu.on.ca](mailto:info4you@porcupinehu.on.ca)  
Web site: [www.porcupinehu.on.ca](http://www.porcupinehu.on.ca)

Branch Offices: Cochrane, Hearst,  
Hornepayne, Iroquois Falls, Kapuskasing,  
Matheson,  
Moosonee, Smooth Rock Falls

consider standards, such as those from the [CSA](#) and American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).

Additional steps you can take:

- Use portable air cleaners.
- Keep windows and doors open as much as possible, including in colder weather.
- Adjust HVAC systems to increase the amount of fresh air and reduce recirculation.
- Continue ventilation and air exchange after regular business hours.
- Use available outdoor space whenever possible (for example, for meetings, breaks, client interactions such as curbside pick-up).
- Meet virtually.
- Consider going beyond minimum standards if possible.

If fans are needed for temperature control, make sure you are using them as safely as possible.

### **PPE Recommendations:**

While PPE is the last line of defense when protecting your workers, it is time to shift from cloth face coverings to appropriate PPE. The Reopening Ontario Act requires workers who are within 2 meters of an unmasked individual to wear PPE that consists of **a mask and eye protection**. Use the required PPE for all workers who must be within 2 meters of another person and for workers who spend prolonged periods of time with other staff in poorly ventilated areas. A list of PPE vendors can be found on the province's PPE Supplier Directory website <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/workplace-ppe-supplier-directory>.

Every employee should receive training on proper donning and doffing of PPE. Public Health Ontario has a great training resources available:

- Donning PPE <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-maskeyes-on>
- Doffing PPE <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/videos/ipac-maskeyes-off>

### **What is PPE?**

- Face masks: A NIOSH- or ASTM-certified mask is considered PPE. Health Canada has also approved some foreign masks, including select KN95 masks, for use as PPE.
- Eye protection: Face shields, goggles, and CSA-approved safety glasses are considered eye protection. Prescription eyewear is not considered eye protection.
- Even with appropriate PPE, a minimum distance of 2 meters from other workers and clients should be maintained whenever possible.

### **What is not appropriate PPE?**

- Cloth masks, gaiters or scarves are not considered PPE, since they do not offer enough protection.

- **Extra** caution must be taken with workers who cannot wear PPE (i.e., **enhanced** distancing **greater** than 2 meters, barriers in well-ventilated areas, or working from home.

Please note that these recommendations also apply even if your workplace is closed to the public. These measures need to be in place to protect your employees, in addition to other members of the public. PPE should also be worn when providing curbside pick-up or delivery services.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Porcupine Health Unit at 1-800-267-1818 or visit our workplace website <https://bit.ly/3nvsUso>.

Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication to protecting your workplace, and our communities!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lianne Catton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lianne Catton, MD, CCFP-EM, MPH  
Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer

