



March 21, 2020

RE: COVID-19 Guidance for Multi-Unit Dwellings

What is COVID-19?

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is known to cause infection in the respiratory system. Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms or may not know they have symptoms because they are similar to a cold or flu. Symptoms include fever, cough, difficulty breathing and pneumonia and may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19.

Current evidence shows that the COVID-19 virus spreads from person-to-person through direct contact or over short distances by droplets that fall quickly to the ground and do not stay suspended in the air. This includes when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and through prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands. Temporary contamination of surfaces can occur from these droplets or from contaminated hands. At this time, there is no evidence that transmission of COVID-19 through ventilation systems takes place.

It is important to recognize that the COVID-19 situation is evolving very quickly. Please refer to OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus to stay up-to-date on the latest information.

Reducing the Spread of COVID-19

We all have a role to play in reducing the spread of COVID-19. Ottawa Public Health (OPH) recommends that everyone take the following actions:

Reduce the spread of germs including the flu and COVID-19:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth unless you have just cleaned your hands.
- Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue or into your arm, not your hand.

Even if you do not have symptoms, it is recommended to self-isolate for 14 days if:

- You have travelled **anywhere outside of Canada** (including the United States of America).

- You live with, provided care for, or spent extensive time with someone who has:
 - Tested positive for COVID-19, OR is suspected to have COVID-19, OR who has respiratory symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) that started within 14 days of travel outside of Canada.

For more information, visit [OPH Self-Isolation webpage](#).

Practice social distancing by maintaining 2 metres (6 feet) from those around you, to limit the number of people you come into close contact with; for example:

- Avoid groups of people or crowds.
- Take precautions to maintain distance in shared spaces; for example:
 - Avoid crowded elevators (wait for an empty one if you can).
 - Avoid using the mail room or laundry room at the same time as other residents (keep to a small number at a time to maintain distance).
- Avoid visits to long-term care homes, retirement homes, supportive housing, hospices and other congregated care settings unless absolutely essential.

Visit the [OPH social distancing webpage](#) for other suggestions.

To encourage these precautions, we encourage landlords and property managers to post the attached social distancing signage, as well as the signage [found on OPH's website](#) in different languages that address topics such as handwashing and cough etiquette.

Social distancing does not mean emotional distancing. Encourage residents to check in with others by phone or other technology. Check in with yourself. It's ok not to be ok. Please know that help is available, and we encourage residents to reach out to the Distress Centre of Ottawa to connect with someone at 613-238-3311 if needed.

Additional recommendations for multi-unit dwellings

OPH recommends the following additional actions in multi-unit dwellings:

- Suspend all non-urgent inspections and repair work, if possible.
- Close all onsite recreational amenities and gathering spaces (e.g. party rooms, fitness facilities, pools), if possible.
- Encourage limited use of public areas for necessary outings and take additional precautions in shared spaces (e.g. lobbies, hallways, mail rooms, laundry rooms).

Take extra precautions to clean and disinfect surfaces as often as possible:

- Remember to clean surfaces first, then disinfect them.

- Ensure an adequate supply of water, soap, paper towels for cleaning and disinfectant for sanitizing in spaces such as laundry rooms.
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces often, at a minimum of twice a day (e.g. buzzer systems/kiosks, doorknobs, hand railing, light switches, elevator buttons, etc.) or as they become visibly soiled.
- Use an appropriate cleaner and disinfectant, as per manufacturer's instructions.
- Remove items from shared spaces that may be hard to clean or disinfect (e.g. intricate lamps).

For additional cleaning information:

Please consult OPH's [cleaning and disinfection checklist](#) and Public Health Ontario's [fact sheet on cleaning and disinfection for public settings](#) for more information.

Supporting each other and our community

We understand that this is a challenging time, but measures like this are needed to ensure that the spread of COVID-19 in our community is limited.