

Communities, Culture and Heritage

COVID-19 Prevention Guide for event organizers, theatres and performance venues

About COVID-19

COVID-19 is most commonly spread from an infected person through respiratory droplets generated by coughing, sneezing, laughing, singing, and talking. It spreads more easily when contact is close (within 2 metres) and prolonged (more than 15 minutes).

COVID-19 can also be spread by close personal contact with someone who is infected – such as touching, hugging, shaking hands – or touching an item carrying the virus and then touching one’s mouth, nose or eyes before washing one’s hands. People who have few or no symptoms can still spread COVID-19.

The most effective measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 include separating people by maintaining physical distance and the use of physical barriers. Using a layered approach with multiple measures from the areas listed below (e.g., environmental cleaning, frequent hand hygiene) decreases the number of interactions and increases the safety of interactions that occur.

We are confident event organizers will be creative and innovative in implementing the Public Health measures.

About this guide

This document is specifically for organizations, performance venues, live theatres, event organizers, faith-based gatherings, cinemas and drive-in events. It is meant to help you reduce the risks related to COVID-19 and plan to adhere to public health guidelines.

Use this guide to help you build your own plan to mitigate the risks related to COVID-19. Public Health does not require approval of each plan, but staff at Communities, Culture and Heritage can assist and/or provide advice.

Organizers and planners must assess the risks associated with their event and determine if they are able to implement the public health measures contained in the [Health Protection Order](#).

If there is COVID-19 activity in the community, the likelihood of it being introduced during an event or at a theatre/venue is high. Gatherings/events may pose a greater risk of COVID-19 spread if there is a large number of attendees over an extended period of time. Organizers should consider alternate options for an in-person gathering, such as a virtual event, if COVID-19 is present in the community.

Factors for consideration

Some factors to consider while planning your event or performance:

- number of attendees
- size of event/length of event
- activities at event (activities where transmission may be higher – cheering, singing, playing wind instruments)
- location – indoors/outdoors – ventilation; outdoor settings play a role in reducing the risk of COVID-19 disease transmission
- population – will vulnerable individuals be at the event? (designated time/accommodations for vulnerable populations; communication regarding risks associated with COVID-19 and vulnerable populations)
- characteristics of location/venue
- keep detailed lists of attendees and their contact information to facilitate public health investigation in the event of COVID-19 exposure at the gathering/event
- if an attendee becomes symptomatic at the event, they must don a mask (if available) and immediately leave the event
- remove non-essential items and use single use items where possible

- drive-in attendance
- curbside pick-up options for any items for purchase (tickets/merchandise)

You are encouraged to use these guidelines to build your event/performance plan to adhere to public health advice.

Illness

Your plan should address:

- How you will communicate to staff, and attendees that they must stay home if:
 - They are sick or symptomatic
 - They travelled outside of the four Atlantic provinces in the previous 14 days
 - They are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19
 - They are awaiting a COVID-19 test result
- How you will communicate to attendees and staff that some individuals are considered at higher risk of severe illness with COVID-19 (including those over 65 and those with compromised immune systems or underlying medical conditions)
- How attendees and staff will be monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19? The most up to date list of symptoms can be found on the [811](#) website
- How you will ensure staff are kept informed of the most [updated list of signs](#) and symptoms of COVID-19 and how they are monitoring for those symptoms daily
 - This list of symptoms should be posted at entrance locations and attendees should be asked to confirm they have no symptoms and are not otherwise required to self isolate

- How you will ensure that staff will not work while ill, even with mild symptoms, and how staff absenteeism will be tracked by your organization
- How a staff member who becomes symptomatic while they are working will immediately wash their hands, don a mask (if available), tell their supervisor, avoid contact with others and go home to isolate. Staff and volunteers with symptoms should visit 811.novascotia.ca to complete the COVID-19 self-assessment
- How you will immediately isolate an unwell attendee or staff from the event/venue and other attendees
- How you will make masks available for attendees and staff where physical distancing cannot be maintained
 - The use of non-medical masks (cloth or home-made masks) within the venue is not required where physical distancing can be maintained unless otherwise required by a workplace COVID-19 Prevention Plan. However, some staff may choose to bring and wear a non-medical mask while on site.

Self-screening for symptoms

- Staff and volunteers must not work while ill, even with mild symptoms
- Participants should not attend the event if they are exhibiting symptoms
- Signage should be posted that includes self-screening questionnaire. If a staff or volunteer becomes symptomatic while they are working at the event, they should immediately wash their hands, don a mask (if available), tell their supervisor, avoid contact with others and go home to isolate.
- Staff and volunteers with symptoms should visit 811.novascotia.ca to complete the COVID-19 self-assessment

Crowd control

Physical distancing of 2 metres or 6 feet between all individuals helps reduce the spread of illness. Gatherings make this more difficult, so your plan should implement measures to encourage physical distancing across all facets of your operation, etc.

- A 2 metre / 6 foot physical distance must be maintained
 - Between families or groupings of people (gathering limits can be found in the [Health Protection Act Order](#))
 - Between staff and/or volunteers throughout the venue/event, including back of house
 - Between any booth or vendor spaces
 - Between participants/attendees at all times
- The Order must be followed regarding maximum gathering limits
 - Stagger pick-up times (for food)
 - Have staff monitor line-ups to ensure physical distancing is being maintained
 - Visual cues such as drawing circles in the venue or on the grounds where seating isn't available to encourage family/group physical distancing
- Signage should be posted to promote physical distancing
- Clear directional signage for entry and exit locations, with extra staff to monitor physical distancing
- Signage must be posted to promote and ensure one-way traffic for entering and exiting the venue, as well as the flow of people to and from washrooms and concessions
- Increase the distance between seating, picnic tables and benches to ensure there is a 2 meter/6-foot distance between the participants at one table and participants at another table

Parking, transportation, and traffic flow

- Installing physical distancing controls for queuing for parking, entry to the venue/event
- Assigning staff/volunteers to monitor physical distancing throughout
- Stagger parking spaces to allow for space for physical distancing
- Visual cues, such as floor/ground markings, can be used to encourage physical distancing
- Make narrow walkways one-way to facilitate physical distancing
- Physical barriers can be used when physical distancing cannot be maintained where appropriate. Consider the need for additional cleaning and disinfecting of any barriers or dividers
- Use traffic markers to ensure one-way entry and exit
- Signage to ensure one-way flow of pedestrian traffic to gates or entrance.

Vocalists, singers, public speakers and instrumentalists

Singing, use of wind instruments, speaking loudly and cheering may pose a higher risk of spreading the virus. Gatherings and events should limit the risk by implementing the following:

- Consider adapting activities which would normally require individuals to be in close proximity (i.e. music, dance and theatre) to maintain physical distancing
- Individuals who are heavily exerting themselves while engaging in activities at the event (i.e. playing music, singing) should maintain a distance of 4 metres/12 feet from all others while performing, including vocalists and musicians
- Consider having vocalists/musicians face away from others while singing or playing wind instruments
- Increase physical distance between performers and the audience to 4 metres/12 feet

- The number of performers should be limited to soloists or small groups
- Members of a performing group should not mingle with audience members, patrons, venue staff, or volunteers during or after performances

Public health guidance for drive-in events

Drive-in events must follow the same public health measures as other events (e.g. hand hygiene, physical distancing, etc.); however, there are some unique considerations for these types of events

- Vehicles must be parked 2m/6 feet apart
- The requirements for maximum numbers at a gathering and physical distancing between groups must be met
- No sharing of items between vehicles
- Only those in your social group can travel in the same vehicle
- Vehicles should be turned off during the event
- Physically distancing must be maintained in common spaces (washrooms, food service areas)
- Consider flow of traffic in and out of event, including the use of unidirectional traffic and visual cues
- Consider contactless entry and payments for admissions, concessions, etc.
- Limit how often individuals leave their car (no loitering outside of car, should only leave to use washroom and purchase food)
- Ensure adequate number of handwashing facilities
- Ensure staffing levels allow for continued monitoring for maximum gathering limits and physical distancing
- Consider the use of a non-medical mask for staff and individuals who must leave their vehicle (to use the washroom, to purchase food)

Seating and management of venues

You must ensure your venue/event doesn't exceed the maximum capacity as per the Order by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Please ensure you're considering physical distancing and the impact on seating, capacity, and/or the layout of your indoor facility and available outdoor space.

- How will you ensure the gathering sizes within your event or venue do not exceed the maximum gathering limits set out in the Health Protection Act Order? The most current information on gathering limits can be [found here](#).
- How will you ensure your attendees find their seats, while maintaining physical distancing? Ushering patrons directly to the appropriate seats gives you maximum control and allows you to load and unload the room/site safely.
- How will you administer tickets and minimize interaction with attendees and staff?

Some suggestions could include:

- Installing partitions to protect staff at box office
- Ensuring non-medical masks are provided to all staff
- Using electronic ticketing to minimize paper ticketing
- Implementing assigned entry door #s to reduce crowds at main doors
- Installing traffic flow signage
- Installing physical distancing controls for queuing for parking, entry to the venue/event
- Adopting touchless ticket scanning -- guest retains ticket or electronic device during scanning
- Relocate scanning locations away from doorway to increase distancing

- Making alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60%) available to guests at touch points
- Ensuring microphones, headphones, and other personal equipment are not shared, and are sanitized before and after each use

Hygiene practices

Hygiene practices refers to frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

- Signage should be posted to promote hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Hand washing with soap and water is the preferred method of hand hygiene, especially when hands are visibly soiled
- Provide alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60%) at the entrances and throughout the event space to encourage hand hygiene
- Consider providing temporary handwashing stations equipped with soap and water for individuals to wash their hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Practice respiratory etiquette by coughing or sneezing into your sleeve or tissue and discard immediately and perform hand hygiene
- Consider the use of a non-medical mask to protect those around you. For more information visit: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/staying-healthy/#masks>

Environmental Cleaning

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects help prevent the spread of COVID-19. This will reduce the chance of people becoming ill after touching dirty surfaces. Cleaning does not kill germs but helps remove them from the surface. Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection. Do not mix cleaning agents and disinfectants together or use multiple disinfectants together.

- Areas touched often (e.g. tables, railings, light switches, doorknobs, toilets, cash boxes, etc.) should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily and more often as needed
- Disinfectants should be used to eliminate the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Consult the product's Safety Data Sheets for proper use. For a list of approved disinfectants, refer to: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
- Items used between customers (i.e. point of sale systems) must be disinfected between each use
- Sharing of items used by venue staff, participants or performers (i.e. equipment, instruments) should be avoided
- Equipment, instruments and other items that must be shared or passed between individuals should be cleaned and disinfected at an increased frequency. If this is not possible, individuals touching these props should perform hand hygiene before and after touching the items
- Try to avoid the use and handling of cash by using contactless payment. If not possible, it is recommended you keep the cash you receive separate from the cash you use to make change. Try to round your prices to dollar values that will not require change. Have a designated area on the table for customers to leave cash
- At indoor events, opening windows to increase ventilation when weather permits may help reduce the spread of illness
- Waste should be disposed of regularly. Hands should be washed after waste removal. No-touch waste receptacles should be used

Washrooms

- Consider limiting the number of people who occupy the restroom at one time to allow for physical distancing
- Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the restroom without maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres/6 feet from other people. Clearly post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate physical distance of at least 2 metres/6 feet
- Ensure open restrooms are:
 - Operational with functional toilets.
 - [Cleaned and disinfected](#) regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, stall doors, doorknobs, countertops, diaper changing tables, and light switches
 - Clean and disinfect restrooms daily or more often, if possible, with [EPA](#)-approved disinfectants against COVID-19
 - Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep products away from children
 - Adequately stocked with supplies for handwashing, including soap and water or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans

Portable washrooms for outdoor activities

- If you are providing portable toilets, also provide portable handwashing stations and ensure that they remain stocked throughout the duration of the event. If possible, provide hand sanitizer stations that are touch-free
- Organizers should develop a maintenance plan for these items that could include having staff in place to sanitize, determine number of washrooms per person and frequency of cleaning

Food service

- Place minimum 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers at booth for customer use
- Have additional water on hand to supply gravity-fed handwashing stations due to increased handwashing
- Use single service condiments to avoid contamination. Avoid contact and maintain physical distance from customers when providing food orders
- All vendors must have a food permit, unless exempt. Information on food permits can be found at <https://novascotia.ca/nse/food-protection/retailers.asp>
- Terms and conditions will be added to permit to require implementation of COVID-19 prevention measures as outlined in this document
- Dedicate one staff person to handling money and one to food service if you are unable to adequately wash hands between tasks

Declarations

Achieving a safe venue/event requires that an effective and responsible social contract be in place with patrons. They need to participate and contribute to achieving a safe event. Events and venues should include a patron declaration step in their safety/reopening plans. By asking basic questions like the following, we can identify individuals with a heightened risk for transmission.

- Is the patron sick or symptomatic?
- Have they traveled outside Nova Scotia (or Atlantic Canada, effective July 3, 2020) within the last 14 days?
- Are they a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Are they waiting for results of a COVID-19 test?

In an ideal situation, the declaration questions are repeated both at the ticket purchase stage and upon arrival at the venue.

Communication

Communicating your plan to all attendees in advance is critical to ensuring the plan is followed. While there are a variety of ways to communicate your message, including during the purchasing of event/performance tickets, social media and other platforms can be used to:

- Have staff and volunteers model the safety procedures that you are implementing to help set the tone for a safe event
- Inform the public about COVID-19 measures in place
- Inform the public about new COVID-19 measures being implemented
- Inform the public about vendors attending the event and facilitate access to pre-orders through contact with individual vendors, if possible
- Provide a preview of products available at the event to make purchasing efficient
- Provide a platform for vendors to communicate and sell
- Promoting pre-order/prepay and pick-up/ delivery options, if possible