

COVID-19: Public health guidance for public gatherings

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This document provides guidance on the prevention and mitigation of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) at public gatherings, such as meetings, conferences, and other events.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Middlesex-London Health Unit's website (<https://www.healthunit.com/news/novel-coronavirus>) regularly for updates and additional guidance.

Planning advice

- If your event has a total of 250 attendees or more, it is recommended to cancel the event. Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health has advised suspending all gatherings of 250 people or more.
- Given the current COVID-19 climate, the Middlesex-London Health Unit advises limiting all non-essential events of any size.
- If you believe your public gathering is essential and you are considering proceeding with the event, complete a risk assessment using the [decision-making framework](#) provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).

Advice for essential public gatherings

- In advance of the public gathering, develop and implement a COVID-19 plan that considers the following:
 - Processes to isolate those who may become ill during the public gathering
 - Measures to enhance social distancing and avoid crowding throughout the gathering
 - Measures to minimize the likelihood of virus transmission during meals, e.g., offering individually packaged meals rather than a buffet
 - Enhanced infection prevention and control measures, such as the availability of hand sanitizer and hand washing facilities
 - Enhanced environmental cleaning measures, such as cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces frequently
- Throughout the event, passive screening signage should be posted to alert those who have symptoms, or those who have travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days, to not attend.
 - Please refer to the MLHU *COVID-19: Passive Screening Tool* for an example.
- In addition to standard cleaning protocols, clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces throughout the day, and as needed.

Infection prevention and control strategies

- Encourage attendees to practice good respiratory etiquette (e.g., sneezing/coughing into tissue or elbow) and hand hygiene (e.g., frequent hand washing with plain soap and water).
- Avoid preparing and distributing food and beverages. If food or beverages will be offered, implement measures to minimize the number of people who have contact with food, beverages, and serving utensils.
- In addition to standard cleaning protocols, clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces throughout the day, and as needed.

Management of individuals who develop symptoms of possible COVID-19

- Separate individuals who show symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, difficulty breathing) from others immediately and direct them to a supervised area until the person can go home.
- If someone is seriously ill and in need of immediate medical attention, call 911.
- Anyone who is needed to provide care to an individual who is symptomatic should maintain a distance of two meters from the individual, if possible. If this is not possible, contact Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 or the Health Unit at 519-663-5317 for further assessment and guidance.
- Once the individual has left, clean and disinfect the space in which the person was separated. Refer to *MLHU Guidance on Environmental Cleaning for Non-healthcare Public Settings*.

Maintain cleaning and disinfecting policies

- Facilities should follow routine cleaning and disinfection protocols, especially for high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, handrails, light switches, toilet handles, and faucet handles.
- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
- Water fountain mouthpieces should be cleaned and disinfected regularly according to the manufacturer's recommendations.