

COVID-19: Public health guidance for public gatherings

March 30, 2020

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 website (<https://www.healthunit.com/novel-coronavirus>) regularly for updates and additional guidance.

Planning advice

- Effective March 28, 2020, the Government of Ontario has prohibited organized public events and social gatherings of more than 5 people.
 - This includes parades, weddings, and communal services within places of worship.
 - This order does not apply to private households with 5 or more people.
 - Funerals may proceed with up to 10 people at one time.
- Given the current COVID-19 climate, the Middlesex-London Health Unit advises limiting all non-essential events of any size.

Advice for essential public gatherings (funerals up to 10 people, gatherings of 5 or less)

- In advance of the public gathering, develop and implement a COVID-19 plan that considers the following:
 - Measures to enhance physical distancing (2 meters).
 - Measures to minimize the likelihood of 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 regularly cleaning and disinfecting high touch surfaces.
- Throughout the event, passive screening signage should be posted to alert those who have symptoms or 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 non-healthcare settings](#) 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

- Immediately separate individuals who show symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, difficulty breathing) from others in a supervised area until the person can go home.
- If someone is seriously ill and in need of immediate medical attention, call 911.
- Anyone required to provide care to a symptomatic individual should maintain a distance of two (2) 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 their standard protocols for routine cleaning and disinfection, especially for high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, hand rails, light switches, toilet handles, and faucet handles.
- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19.
- Water fountain mouthpieces should be regularly cleaned and disinfected according to the manufacturer's recommendations.