

COVID-19 Guidance for Food Banks/Donation Centres

COVID-19 is caused by a novel coronavirus and can cause acute respiratory illness. In general, these viruses are spread when a sick person coughs or sneezes. COVID-19 is spread person-to-person through large respiratory droplets (e.g. coughing, sneezing) that can travel up to two metres (six feet). It may also be possible for a person to get COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. The majority of people with COVID-19 develop a mild illness, which may include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. For more general information about COVID-19, visit www.toronto.ca/COVID19.

Food banks/donation centres should continue to operate and receive items from community members during this time. The following recommendations provide guidance to donation centres that deliver food and other items to members of the community regarding risk reduction.

Advice for food bank/donation centre operators

- **Reduce the risk of transmission during activities:**
 - Obtain information from credible sources. Stay up to date with information about COVID-19 on our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19.
 - Conduct screening to ensure staff, volunteers and clients are not ill:
 - If you have a phone line, ask staff, volunteers and clients to call prior to their shift/visit and screen them or have a recorded message.
 - Ask people who may have any symptoms of respiratory illness to defer any visits
 - Ask clients, staff, volunteers and other partners to not visit the centre and stay home if they are sick.
 - Staff/volunteers who have travelled outside of Canada, including the United States, must stay home and self-isolate for 14 days after returning to Canada.
 - Refer to TPH's guide [how to self-isolate for returning travellers with no symptoms](#).
 - Practice [physical distancing](#) to ensure a two metre (six feet) separation between staff and clients.
 - To avoid crowding and to support physical distancing, schedule appointments with individuals wishing to pick up/drop-off items.
 - Avoid scheduling large volunteer groups from attending the donation centre at the same time.
 - Ensure sufficient workspace is provided allowing for appropriate distancing (two metres or six feet) between volunteers/staff and to prevent crowding or individuals from grouping together.
 - Enhance cleaning and disinfecting measures of high traffic and frequently touched surfaces.
 - Post signage throughout the food bank/donation centre reminding individuals about ways to [protect themselves](#) (e.g. hand hygiene, social distancing, and respiratory etiquette).

Infection prevention and control practices for staff at food banks/donation centres

- **Practice proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette:**
 - Hand hygiene includes [washing hands](#) with soap and water for at least 15 seconds, or the use of an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#).
 - Increase hand hygiene practices (e.g. before and after receiving items and prior to assembling donation packages for delivery).
 - Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
 - If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Avoid shaking hands; use non-physical forms of greeting.
- **Enhance environmental cleaning and disinfecting:**
 - Increase cleaning and disinfection of high traffic areas, and frequently touched surfaces and objects (e.g. door knobs, light switches, pens, counters, toilet, sinks, handrails, keypads, touch screens, etc.). High touch surfaces and items in common areas must be cleaned and disinfected at least twice daily.
 - Disinfectants should have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
 - Refer to [Health Canada's Drug Product Database online query](#) to search by product name, active ingredient, company etc.
 - Alternatively, chlorine bleach solutions may be used for disinfection.
 - Staff should follow the manufacturer's instructions on how to use the cleaning agents and disinfectants including:
 - Disinfectant contact times.
 - Safety precautions and required personal protective equipment (e.g. eye protection, masks gloves).
 - Securely storing cleaning and disinfectant supplies.
 - Review Public Health Ontario's [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#).

Precautions for staff to reduce the risk of transmission during delivery

- **Reduce the risk of transmission during deliveries:**
 - Contact clients in advance to schedule a delivery/pick up time, where possible.
 - Pre-bag or box donations into smaller/lighter packages for easier delivery and carrying.
 - Volunteers and staff who are making deliveries to apartments and homes should take the following precautions to protect themselves and their clients:
 - Avoid entering the client's home if possible. Deliver packages for clients at their front door without entering their home to limit contact.
 - Practice [physical distancing](#) and maintain a two metre (six feet) distance from other people.

- [Wash hands](#) often with soap and water for at least 15 seconds, and if soap and water is not available use an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#).
- Practice hand hygiene after contacting frequently touched surfaces.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid shaking hands; use non-physical forms of greeting.
- Cover your cough or sneeze into a tissue. Immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands.
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (e.g. pens, delivery containers, and surfaces in delivery vehicles).

Precautions for staff entering homes of clients who are unable to carry donation packages from their front door into their home

- **Reduce the risk of transmission:**
 - Practice [physical distancing](#) and maintain a two metre (six feet) distance from the client.
 - Avoid shaking hands; use non-physical forms of greeting.
 - Avoid touching surfaces in the client's home.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Practice hand hygiene. [Wash hands](#) with soap and water for at least 15 seconds, and if soap and water is not available use an alcohol-based [hand sanitizer](#) immediately after the delivery.

More information

For more information, visit our website at www.toronto.ca/COVID19 or call us at 416-338-7600.

References

Public Health Agency of Canada (2020). *Community-based measures to mitigate the spread of coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) in Canada*. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html>

Public Health Ontario (2020). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings*. Retrieved from <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en> .

Public Health Ontario (2020). *Technical Brief Update IPAC Recommendations for Use of Personal Protective Equipment for Care of Individuals with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/updated-ipac-measures-covid-19.pdf?la=en>

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