



COVID-19 updates for OVMA members

Masks and social distancing: COVID-19 first line of defence

Over the past week, Ontario has witnessed daily increases in COVID-19 cases. To minimize the risk of exposure to your staff, clients and patients, clinics are reminded that staff should be following Public Health guidance. Where physical distancing isn't possible, or where workers have frequent or close contact with clients or other staff members, masks are required because they offer a source of infection control. While cloth masks may be worn, medical-grade masks are highly recommended for all clinic staff, especially when staff are working closely together for a prolonged period of time. Aside from masking, social distancing and hand hygiene are imperative in reducing the spread of the virus.

Resources:

- [OVMA's Practice Reopening Guide](#)
- [OVMA's COVID-19 resource web page](#)
- [Worms and Germs Blog](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

A staff member may have been exposed to COVID-19: Now what?

Scenario A – An employee falls ill.

If the employee becomes ill:

- The ill staff member should remain at home or immediately go home if the symptoms surface while at work. If the employee was at work, the clinic/office does not need to close, but remaining staff should sanitize all workspaces.
- The ill staff member is to contact telehealth Ontario or an assessment centre to determine if COVID-19 testing is required.
- Should it be determined that the individual does not need to be tested for COVID-19, they are

to remain at home until they are well and symptom-free for at least 24 hours.

- Should the individual be tested for COVID-19 and test positive, Public Health will notify the employer and provide next steps. A COVID-19 positive test does not automatically mean that everyone in the clinic needs to self-isolate or is at risk—it will depend on the health practices and social distancing being done at the clinic. Public Health will evaluate and provide directives.
- Ensure a thorough cleaning of the ill employee's work area and any other areas in the clinic where the staff member may have worked during their last shift.

Scenario B – An employee's spouse/partner or another family member who they are living with falls ill.

- The staff member should remain at home.
- The staff member should seek direction from telehealth Ontario or an assessment centre.
- Should COVID-19 testing be required, the staff member should self-isolate until results are received and further direction is provided by Public Health.
- If COVID-19 testing is not required and the employer wants the staff member to remain at home, they may ask the individual to do so but the employer will be required to pay the individual's salary.

Scenario C – An employee was somewhere (e.g. a grocery store) where a store employee later tested positive for COVID-19.

- Having been in a facility where someone subsequently tests positive for COVID-19 does not automatically mean that everyone who has been in close proximity to the ill person needs to self-isolate or is at risk.
- Individuals who have been potentially exposed to COVID-19 should contact their local Public Health Unit for more direction, as each situation will be unique and contact tracing may be required.
- Employers can ask exposed staff to remain at home, while being paid, and contact Public Health for further direction.

Scenario D – A client who recently visited the clinic tested positive for COVID-19.

- Having a client visit the clinic who later tests positive for COVID-19 does not automatically mean everyone who has been in close proximity to the ill person needs to self-isolate or is at risk.
- A contact tracer will be assigned to individuals who test positive for the virus and will evaluate exposure risk to all individuals/business who may have been in contact with the case positive individual. Public Health will provide further direction based on the risk assessment with regards to quarantining and COVID-19 testing.
- If staff have been following proper protocols (e.g. wearing masks, sanitizing workstations, keeping six feet between them when possible, etc.), the risk exposure would be low.
- Employers who are concerned about a potential exposure to COVID-19 should contact their local Public Health Unit for more direction, as each situation will be unique and contact tracing may be required.

In all scenarios, employers can contact their local Public Health Unit for more direction, if required.

Resources:

- [Find your local Public Health Unit](#)
- Take the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 self-assessment](#)
- View the of Health's [Quick Reference Sheet](#) for more information on COVID-19 testing and clearance

New federal COVID-19 benefits will be available Sunday

In August, the federal government announced two new benefits for employees. As of Sept. 27, the **Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit** and the **Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit** will be available. For more information on these programs, see OVMA's [Aug. 26 issue of NewsHound](#).



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