

# Navigating the Way Forward: A Guide to Getting Back to the Workplace



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# Topics covered

- Getting ready
- How to maintain physical distancing
- Steps to consider when physical distancing is not possible
- Workplace sanitization
- Steps to consider if an employee contracts COVID-19
- Employee wellness
- Employee policies, health and safety considerations
- Notes
- Resources





## Getting ready

The provincial/territorial governments are beginning to reopen their jurisdictions, as COVID-19 lockdown measures are eased. The reopening process is an opportunity for employers to begin to develop plans on how they will reopen their physical locations. The information in this playbook is to help employers as they begin the planning process. The information contained in this playbook should only be used as a guide and businesses should follow any specific direction provided by their provincial/territorial government.

Prior to opening a workplace premise it is suggested that employers consider the following:

- Determine when you can legally reopen based on the applicable government orders and restrictions for your location
- Evaluate whether you can reopen safely based on public health orders and guidance and on your employer occupational health and safety obligations
  - Make this determination with all relevant stakeholders
  - Conduct a walk through of the premises to identify and address workplace risks and hazards
- Communicate your reopening plans to:
  - Employees
  - Vendors/suppliers
  - Customers

- Ensure you have a sufficient supply of the following items:
  - Cleaning supplies and disinfectants
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks and/or face shields
  - Protective barriers if required
- Complete a deep cleaning of your premises with special attention to high traffic areas:
  - Washrooms
  - Reception
  - Large meeting rooms
  - Break areas
- Keep records of what actions have been taken to prevent COVID-19, what measures have been taken in response, which employees have taken leaves of absence, for how long, etc.
- Take note of the privacy and human rights limits on record-keeping, and the company's record-keeping policy
- Update any related policies to reflect the changed work environment





## How to maintain physical distancing

- Allow employees to continue to work from home if feasible
- Consider staggered start times and end times to avoid office congestion at key times in the day, such as 9 a.m. or 5 p.m.
- Consider calling in only essential staff to the physical workplace
- Consider rotating teams coming into the office. One week team A is in the office, the next week team B
- Limit entrances and exit points to control the flow of people into and out of the building. Please note you still must follow the appropriate fire code evacuation requirements for emergency exit points for the jurisdiction where you operate
- Rearrange workspaces and floor plans to create more space in the office to allow for physical distancing of at least two metres between individuals
- Close off access to small meeting rooms
- Remove chairs, shared reading material, candies, etc. from common areas
- Arrange break area furniture so people are at least two metres apart

- Limit the number of visitors into the workplace
- Limit elevator occupancy
- Deliver services remotely or deliver products through curbside pick-up or delivery
- Discourage hand shaking
- Discourage the sharing of tools and equipment and of food and drinks
- Post signage throughout the workplace that reminds employees the importance of physical distancing
- Modify washroom areas to limit the number of people able to use the washroom at one time







## Steps to consider when physical distancing is not possible

- Install physical barriers such as plexiglass between work areas
- Provide Personal Protection Equipment to all employees
  - Masks
  - Face shields
  - Gloves
  - Gowns
  - Other protective equipment as appropriate for the industry
  - Implement an enhanced cleaning schedule to clean and disinfect work areas regularly



## Workplace sanitization

- Conduct enhanced cleaning throughout the premises regularly, in accordance with public health and occupational health and safety obligations
- Ensure that high traffic areas are disinfected on a regular basis
- Limit the numbers of visitors or prohibit visitors to the workplace
- Encourage and train employees to clean their desk/workspace
- Provide hand sanitizer in locations where water and soap is not readily available
- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles
- Ensure that soap and hand sanitizers are topped up at all times
- Train employees on physical hygiene measures and post signage throughout the workplace reminding employees to cough into their elbow and to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds at regular intervals including:
  - At the start and end of a work shift
  - Before and after meal breaks
  - After touching shared objects
- Tell employees that if they are not well, they need to stay home and follow the health recommendations of their local public health authority
- Have employees complete a health survey to determine if they should be in the workplace (example provided in resources section)
- Some organizations may consider conducting temperature testing. Seek legal counsel prior to implementing temperature testing as there are critical privacy and human rights implications in this practice and it may not be considered reasonable in most workplaces, not to mention the ongoing controversy around the effectiveness of this practice





## Steps to consider if an employee contracts COVID-19

- Advise all employees who may have come into contact with the infected individual about possible exposure. You will need to keep the individual's identity confidential in order to meet your obligations on maintaining employees' privacy.
- Have exposed employees work from home and monitor their symptoms for at least 14 days, or as per the guidance provided by their local public health authority
- If the exposed employees do not show any symptoms after the appropriate timeframe elapses, you may have them return to the workplace
- Conduct a deep cleaning of all areas of the premises the infected employee may have entered
- Follow the appropriate guidance provided by local public health officials when an employee has contracted COVID-19, including possible reporting requirements



## Employee wellness

- Maintaining physical distance of at least two metres, meet with employees upon their return to the workplace and be available to answer any questions they may have
- Help employees control what they can
- Encourage employees to seek medical and public health information from reputable sources such as government websites
- Remind employees to wash their hands frequently and practice physical distancing; provide training on these and other health and safety topics
- If you have an employee assistance program or wellness program remind employees it is available to them
- Direct employees to mental health resources available to support them during this time
- Have employees take breaks and get plenty of rest
- Stress the importance of eating healthy and getting exercise
- Suggest employees connect with friends and family to have healthy social interactions, based on the guidelines provided by the local authorities





## Employee policies, health and safety considerations

- Update and/or introduce policies to reflect the following considerations based on the current pandemic:
  - Travel guidelines
  - Social events
  - Work from home
  - Acceptable use of company technology
  - Expense reimbursement
  - Health and safety, including adherence to public health guidelines and requirements, such as physical distancing, proper hand-washing hygiene, proper work methods and materials handling
  - Leaves of absence
- Follow clear guidelines if employees refuse to return to work
  - Employers may have the duty to accommodate employees if the employees have child or elder care obligations or are looking after a family member who has COVID-19. It is important that businesses connect with their appropriate advisor to determine their obligations
  - If an employee refuses to work because they feel the

workplace is unsafe the employer should consider taking the following actions:

- Investigate the employee's concerns
- Take necessary steps to address the employee's concerns if possible
- If the employee still refuses to return to work, you may need to contact the appropriate government agency inspect the workplace to address any remaining concerns
- Do not penalize or retaliate against an employee who exercises their right to review unsafe work in good faith
- Consult legal counsel



# Notes



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# Resources



## Employee self-screening health questionnaire\*

### Risk assessment: Screening questions

1. Do you have any of the following symptoms which are new or worsened if associated with allergies, chronic, or pre-existing conditions: fever, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, sore throat and/or runny nose?	Yes	No
2. Have you returned to Canada from outside the country in the past 14 days?	Yes	No

### In the past 14 days, at work or elsewhere, while not wearing appropriate personal protective equipment:

3. Did you have close contact with someone who has a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19?	Yes	No
4. Did you have close contact with a person who had acute respiratory illness that started within 14 days of their close contact to someone with a probable or confirmed case of COVID-19?	Yes	No
5. Did you have close contact with a person who had acute respiratory illness and who returned from travel outside of Canada in the 14 days before they became sick?	Yes	No

If an employee answers yes to any of the questions above they should not come into the office and should visit their local health authority website for further guidance.

This questionnaire is to be completed by the employee and kept by the employee.

\*"COVID-19 Guidance Daily Fit for Work Screening Protocol"

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-daily-fitness-for-work-screening-protocols.pdf>. Accessed 19 May, 2020.



# Resources

## Government COVID-19 websites

- [British Columbia](#)
- [Alberta](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Quebec](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
- [Yukon](#)
- [Northwest Territories](#)
- [Nunavut](#)



# Disclaimers

The information contained in this document is summary in nature and is intended to provide general guidance only. It should not be viewed as a replacement for legal or professional advice. While every effort is made to provide current information, the law changes regularly and laws may vary depending on the province or territory. You should review applicable law in your jurisdiction and consult experienced counsel for legal advice. This content is the property of ADP Canada Co.



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