

Statement

Enhanced Measures to Protect Ontarians from COVID-19

March 16, 2020

TORONTO — Today, Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health issued the following statement detailing enhanced public health measures to help contain the spread of COVID-19:

"Following a number of significant announcements regarding travel and public health measures over the past 72 hours, and after further consultations with my colleagues across Canada, I would like to take the opportunity to clarify my guidance to Ontarians on COVID-19.

This is an evolving situation, and your role in helping to manage the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario is critical. It is imperative that we take steps now and take steps together to reduce opportunities for transmission. I am asking for your cooperation in following the advice below as best you can over the coming weeks. By working together, we can make a difference in this outbreak and protect those among us who are most vulnerable to COVID-19.

The symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, new cough and difficulty breathing, and these may occur within 14 days of an exposure to another case.

Additional closures

I am strongly recommending a further limitation to public gatherings from my advice on March 12, 2020. I am further advising Ontarians **to avoid large gatherings of over 50 people**. In addition, I am specifically requesting the closure of the following settings as soon as possible:

- All recreational programs and libraries
- All private schools
- All daycares
- All churches and other faith settings
- All bars and restaurants, with the exception of restaurants that can shift to takeout/delivery mechanisms

If you do not have any symptoms of COVID-19

Everyone in Ontario should be practicing social distancing to reduce their exposure to other people. This means that you can carry out daily activities, such as going to work (if you cannot work from home) and doing necessary shopping and appointments.

I ask that everyone in Ontario does their best to avoid close contact with people outside of their immediate families. Close contact includes being within 2 meters of another person.

In addition:

If you believe you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 symptoms, I recommend that you begin to **self-monitor** for a period of 14 days. This means that, in addition to social distancing, you should track how you feel. You should take your temperature daily and log any other symptoms that develop (e.g., sore throat, new cough). You can share these records with your primary care provider over the phone if you seek assessment services.

All persons over 70 years of age and individuals who are immunocompromised are advised to **self-isolate** for a period of 14 days. This means that you should only leave your home or see other

people for essential reasons. Where possible, you should seek services over the phone or internet or ask for help from friends, family or neighbours with essential errands.

If you have travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days

If you have travelled and are not a healthcare worker or another essential service worker, I ask that you **self-isolate** for 14 days since your arrival in Canada. People who are self-isolating should not go to work.

In addition:

- Workers who have travelled and are part of workplaces that are essential to daily living are able to return to work as long as they are asymptomatic. However, they should **self-monitor** for a period of 14 days and identify themselves to their employer so that a plan can be put into place to ensure the protection of those workplaces.
- Children under the age of 16 years who have travelled outside of Canada should also **self-isolate** for a period of 14 days. Parents should actively monitor their children's symptoms. Children who are self-isolating should stay at home and avoid social gathering points such as community centres or parks.

Public Health Ontario has excellent [fact sheets](#) on how to self monitor and self isolate.

If you start to feel symptoms of COVID-19

I am requesting anyone who begins to feel unwell (fever, new cough or difficulty breathing) to return home and **self-isolate** immediately. People who are self-isolating should seek clinical assessment over the phone - either through TeleHealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000) or by calling their primary care provider's office. If you need additional assessment, your primary care provider or TeleHealth will direct you to in-person care options. If you are in medical distress and need urgent care, you should call 911 and let them know what you are self-isolating because of COVID-19.

If you are an employer

I am asking all employers in Ontario to facilitate virtual work arrangements to enable employees to work from home where possible to enable workers to limit their activities, care for children and to self isolate. However, I recognize that there are a number of workplaces where this is not possible. I would ask those employers to use their judgement to sustain operations in a manner that maintains social distancing.

If need to seek health care for COVID-19

If you are unwell and need to seek health assessment for COVID-19 there are three options to available:

- A Self Assessment Tool available at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- Telehealth Ontario at: 1-866-797-0000 (24/7)
- Your primary care provider - you should call your primary care provider and they will provide virtual assessment by phone or other technology. You should not book an in-person visit for COVID-19 assessment without first having a virtual assessment.

If you require an in-person health assessment, you will be referred to an appropriate location for in-person health assessment. Only people with COVID-19 symptoms will be tested.

I want to remind all Ontarians that there are important actions that they should be taking every day in order to protect your health. These include:

- washing your hands often with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- sneezing and cough into your sleeve

- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay at home if you are sick. In particular, do not visit a long-term care, retirement home or other congregate living situation.

Thank you for all of your support. These are difficult times, but together we will move through and protect the most vulnerable among us."

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