

Guidance for Office Workers During COVID-19

The University of Ottawa – through its management and supervisors – is responsible for ensuring a healthy and safe work environment. Refer to [Policy 77 – Occupational Health and Safety](#) as well as [Procedure 14-1 – Internal Responsibility System for Health and Safety Issues](#) for further clarification on roles and responsibilities.

Any concerns should be first reported to your direct supervisor or manager. Workers may also report concerns to their [functional occupational health and safety committee](#), their [Health, Safety and Risk Manager](#), or the [Office of Risk Management](#). If the matter is unable to be resolved, workers may contact the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development at 1-877-202-0008.

Team Effort

The health and safety of the campus community is our most important focus amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone must place an increased focus on health and safety in order to keep university operations open and safe. We are all responsible for ensuring a healthy and safe workplace, so if you witness an issue, you are empowered to speak up!

Symptoms

According to Health Canada, symptoms can manifest in as little as a few days, or as long as 14 days after being exposed to someone with COVID-19. Symptoms can include fever, cough, sore throat and shortness of breath. For some, the symptoms are like having a cold; for others they are quite severe or even life-threatening.

Transmission

COVID-19 typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, personal contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then the mouth, nose or eyes. The greatest exposure risks are those involving close contact with a potentially infected person or touching potentially contaminated items (such as desks, keyboards, counters, door handles, hard surfaces and elevator buttons) and then inadvertently touching your face, mouth or eyes.

Preventing Spread and Protecting Yourself

- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds. Alcohol-based (60%) hand sanitizer is an acceptable alternative where handwashing facilities are not available.
- Sneeze and cough into the bend of your elbow/sleeve.
- When using tissues, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose and mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Where possible, avoid high-touch areas. Make sure to wash your hands after.

- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons. Where physical distancing cannot be maintained, consider wearing a facial covering to reduce the spread of your respiratory droplets. Note: facial coverings are not considered personal protective equipment.
- Follow directional flow pathways.
- Work remotely as much as possible.
- Suspend in-person work meetings and activities. Use Microsoft Teams whenever possible.
- Stagger shift start, break and end times.
- Minimize the number of people in an office area. Reallocate the physical space to ensure physical distancing. Consider identifying work areas. Working in shifts may be required.
- Discourage sharing of common office equipment, such as telephones, keyboards, desks and workstations. Implement regular sanitizing of shared items.
- Install barriers or windows at service counters to minimize direct contact.

Reporting Illnesses

- Any worker who is experiencing any symptoms of a cold, a flu or COVID-19 should not come to work and should advise their supervisor. The supervisor must advise the Health and Wellness Office.
- Any worker who is experiencing any symptoms of a cold, a flu or COVID-19 should be sent home. The supervisor must advise the Health and Wellness Office.

Cleaning Protocols

Facilities continues to offer regular cleaning services; however, local work units are encouraged to increase the sanitization of workplace areas, including touch points (door handles, light switches, buttons, etc.), office equipment (keyboards, computer mice, etc.), common areas and shared items.

Attending Campus

If you have an essential purpose to be on campus and have received derogation, before coming to campus, ensure that:

- your supervisor is aware;
- you have completed the self-assessment questionnaire and can safely attend.

Once on campus:

- Maintain a physical distance from others.
 - Wear a mask or facial covering where this is not possible.
- Abide by the signage posted (directional signage, elevator signage, etc.).
- Wash your hands regularly.

Work Refusal

Provisions of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* continue to apply, including work refusals. The work refusal [process is posted online](#).



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

Bureau de la gestion du risque | Office of Risk Management
139, rue Louis-Pasteur, pièce 265 | 139 Louis-Pasteur Street (265)

Work Unit-Specific Practices

Individual work units are encouraged to develop protocols for their specific operations. The Office of Risk Management remains available to assist in the development and review of these guidelines.