

Guidance for Manitoba Businesses if an Employee Tests Positive for COVID-19



Introduction

This guidance outlines the typical public health response in Manitoba to a positive COVID-19 case, with a focus on workplaces.

Public health officials strongly recommend that businesses allowed to remain open make operational changes where possible to protect staff and customers from COVID-19. Examples include allowing employees to work from home, or changing processes related to delivery or pick-up of items at the workplace.

Employers are also asked to emphasize the need for workers to stay home if they are sick, even if the symptoms are mild. Businesses need to support workers to make this possible.

If your business will remain open during an outbreak, it is also important that preventative measures be taken. Many of these measures include public health fundamentals, including:

- ensuring staff practice physical distancing
- washing hands with soap and water at least 15 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- practicing proper cough etiquette
- using face coverings where applicable
- performing a daily self-health screening (www.manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf)
- cohorting workers (i.e. ensuring regular work groups continue to work together to minimize the number of contacts for each worker)
- instructing employees to stay at home when sick, even if symptoms are mild
- increasing the level of cleaning and sanitizing of high-contact surfaces to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure

Simple steps can make a big difference in protecting your community and your workplace.

For more information and guidance on operational changes and preventative measures for businesses visit: www.manitoba.ca/covid19/.

What if my employee tests positive?

Public health officials understand a positive diagnosis can be stressful for the employee and concerning to the employer. The guidance below explains the steps public health officials take when a person tests positive and the role public health officials will play in assessing risk of exposure at a workplace.

What happens when a person is diagnosed with COVID-19?

1. The testing lab notifies the responsible public health unit of each positive case of COVID-19.
2. Public health officials then follow-up with the individual case within 24 hours to:
 - let the person know that they tested positive
 - advise them of the need to isolate for a specified duration of time
 - answer any questions they may have
 - try to determine how they may have been exposed to COVID-19
 - determine when they were infectious
 - identify any locations or settings they visited during their infectious period (e.g. work or public places)
 - determine who their close contacts (i.e. within two metres/six feet for at least 15 minutes) were/are
3. If close contacts are identified, public health officials will:
 - contact those individuals to advise them of the situation
 - confirm if they were in fact a close contact, and if so, to advise them to immediately self-isolate for 14 days following the last date of exposure to the case
 - provide them with information on how to self-monitor for symptoms, and what to do if they develop symptoms during their self-isolation period (which extends from 14 days from their last known contact with the case)

Note: Due to the way in which COVID-19 spreads to others (through respiratory droplets), only close contacts of the person are at an additional risk. Public health officials will therefore only call close contacts.

4. Public health officials will also contact anyone else who they may need to speak with to assess risk to others (e.g. the employer).
5. If the investigation determines that there was a risk of exposure in a workplace or public setting, public health officials will assess the risk and may issue a public notice. In the notice, details of the potential exposure setting will be provided, as well as direction for individuals who may have been present (at the specified time) to self-monitor for symptoms and self-isolate immediately if they develop symptoms.

Note: If the public health investigation determines that there was no risk of exposure in the workplace, public health officials will not contact the employer.

What happens if the individual was at work while infectious?

- If a person was at work while infectious, public health officials will determine if they posed any additional risk to the workplace than what exists in the general community.

Note: Not all cases result in exposures. A brief interaction (e.g. walking past someone who tested positive) does not pose an increased risk. There is also no increased risk of exposure at the workplace if the person was not at work while infectious.

- Public health officials will consult with the employer if additional information is needed about the individual (e.g. to confirm their close contacts or to clarify details that the employee cannot provide) or if any other measures need to be taken by the workplace or staff to reduce the risk of transmission.

- Employers should maintain employee contact information, records pertaining to their scheduled working times and cohort work groups, and visitor activity at the workplace in order to facilitate public health official's ability to establish close contacts.
- Public health officials are required by law to respect the privacy of the person infected, and will only disclose a positive case to an employer if it is needed to manage the exposure risk to others.
- In accordance with privacy laws, the employer must ensure their employee's personal health information related to COVID-19, or any other health condition, remains confidential.
- An employer may decide to notify other staff or visitors that there has been a possible case in their workplace while protecting the names of individual cases to ensure the personal health information of the workers remains confidential.
- Employers should also maintain policies to ensure the personal health information of their workers remains confidential. To best protect an employee's privacy, it is advised that employers use/share the least amount of information possible.
- Communication with the Health Protection Unit, including a public health inspection, may occur to ensure the facility meets the requirement of the public health orders, disinfection and sanitation.
- If the public health investigation determines that COVID-19 was transmitted in the workplace, the Workplace Safety and Health Branch may become involved to review the employer's workplace safe work procedures for preventing the spread of COVID-19 at work (i.e. the workplace pandemic plan) including, but not limited to:
 - worker and visitor health screening
 - consideration of vulnerable workers
 - public health fundamentals (i.e. physical distancing; cough etiquette; use of face coverings as required; hand hygiene)
 - cleaning and disinfection of shared and high touch surfaces
 - COVID-19 communications and worker training

Do all workers in the workplace need to be tested?

- Generally speaking, not all employees in a workplace will need to be tested.
- The public health investigation will identify close contacts who will be asked to self-monitor and self-isolate. If individuals develop symptoms, they will be instructed to complete the online screening self-assessment tool (<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>) or, contact Health Links – Info Santé at **204-788-8200** (or toll free at **1-888-315-9257**) for testing and isolation guidance.
- Depending on the situation, public health officials may advise individuals who have no symptoms to get tested. This guidance will depend on the results of the public health investigation.

Do cases and contacts require a negative test to return to work?

- Cases and contacts do not require a negative test to return to work.
- Provided cases no longer have a fever and their condition has improved, they can stop isolation as early as 10 days from the start of symptoms. Public health officials will be in daily contact to monitor symptoms, and will provide direction on when it is safe to stop isolating.
- Contacts can stop self-isolating 14 days after their last known contact with a confirmed case.

Reference materials for employers

- Appendix 1: Sample Memo Notifying Employees and/or the Public of a Positive Case in the Workplace (for use by employers)
- Appendix 2: Guidance on Cleaning & Disinfection Guidelines for Restaurants and Other Buildings after Known Positive COVID Cases within the Premises
- Appendix 3: Sample Memo from Public Health Notifying a Workplace of a Positive Case (Note: workplaces may, or may not, receive a letter from Public Health)
- Manitoba Public Health has further information on COVID-19 for businesses at the following links:
 - Workplace Guidance at www.manitoba.ca/covid19/restoring/guidance.html
 - Definitions of Vital Services, Critical Infrastructure and Exemption Criteria for Self-Isolation for Out-of-Province Workers at www.manitoba.ca/covid19/business/out_of_province.html
 - Workplace Self-Assessment Checklist for use by Manitoba businesses at www.manitoba.ca/covid19/protection/workplaces.html

APPENDIX 1

Sample memo notifying employees and/or the public of a positive case in the workplace

An Important Update

<<DATE>>

Today we were notified that one of our staff has been confirmed to have the COVID-19 virus.

At this time, the employee is in self-isolation.

We're assisting provincial public health officials in their investigation. Individuals identified as close contacts (having spent more than 15 minutes within less than two meters) of the confirmed case will be contacted by public health officials.

We are currently taking all necessary precautions to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace and ensure the safety of our employees and visitors/customers.

We do know that COVID-19 is a risk in our communities. We encourage everyone to take precautions and follow key public health fundamentals, including: staying home if you're sick, even if symptoms are only mild; washing your hands at least 15 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer; practicing proper cough etiquette and maintaining physical distancing when you do have to go out.

Manitoba public health orders can be found at www.manitoba.ca/covid19/protection/soe.html.

More information on COVID-19 can be found at www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

As your employer, we want to let you know that we are here to support you and answer any additional workplace-related concerns and questions during this difficult time.

Thank you,

<<OWNER>>

APPENDIX 2

Cleaning and Disinfection Guidelines for restaurants and Other Buildings after Known Positive COVID-19 Cases within the Premises

ENHANCED CLEANING and DISINFECTION

Ensure all disinfectants used are approved by Health Canada to be effective against COVID-19. A link to Health Canada, approved disinfectants for COVID-19 can be found at: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html

Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Building or Facility if Someone is Sick

- Companies do not necessarily need to close operations, if they can close off areas used by the person who is sick.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area. When possible, it is highly recommended to have doors and windows that are equipped with screens to limit the chance of pests entering.
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls and ATM machines.
- Use a Health Canada-approved disinfectant that is effective in killing the COVID-19 virus and follow manufacturer's instructions on concentration and contact time required.
- Vacuum the space if needed. Use a vacuum equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, if available.
- Temporarily turn off in-room, window-mounted, or on-wall recirculation HVAC to avoid contamination of the HVAC units.
- Do NOT deactivate central HVAC systems. These systems tend to provide better filtration capabilities and introduce outdoor air into the areas that they serve.
- Once the area has been disinfected, it can be opened for use.
- Continue routine cleaning and disinfection. This includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.

Note: If disinfectants are to be applied, manual surface cleaning with detergent and water using applied friction (e.g. brushing, scrubbing) must be performed first to ensure physical removal of organic materials, followed by use of a cloth or wipe which is soaked in the disinfectant.

For fogging:

- The application of disinfectants to environmental surfaces via spraying or fogging (also known as fumigation or misting) in indoor spaces is not recommended as a stand-alone method.
- If fogging does take place, organic material must be removed before using a Health Canada-approved disinfectant for fogging.
- Workers should follow safe work procedures and established personal protective equipment requirements.
- Spraying environmental surfaces in both health care and non-healthcare settings (e.g. patient households) with disinfectants will not be effective and may pose harm to individuals.

For electronics:

- Consider putting a wipeable cover on electronics as tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls and ATM machines.
- Follow manufacturer's instruction for cleaning and disinfecting.
- If there is no guidance, use alcohol-based wipes or sprays containing at least 70 per cent alcohol.
- Dry surfaces thoroughly.

For soft surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes:

- Clean the surface using soap and water or with cleaners appropriate for use on these surfaces. Launder items (if possible) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely.
- Disinfect with a [Health Canada-approved disinfectant](#). The disinfectant must be approved by Health Canada for use against COVID-19.
- Vacuum as usual.
- Remember to continue to clean and disinfect these areas at regularly scheduled intervals daily.

For Food Handling Establishments:

- It is recommended that a full disinfection be completed in the facility (not only the kitchen) using:
 - diluted household bleach (20 ml/four teaspoons) bleach for every litre of water)
 - alcohol solutions with at least 60 per cent alcohol
 - Health Canada-approved disinfectants for COVID-19. Ensure contact times are achieved (refer to manufacturer's label).
- Ensure all staff practice frequent hand washing techniques, and be sure to have the hand wash sinks stocked with soap and paper towels at all times.
- For further resources on disinfection and sanitization, visit: www.ciphi.ca/resources-for-disinfection-and-sanitization/

APPENDIX 3

Sample Memo from Public Health Notifying a Workplace of a Positive Case

<<DATE>>

Dear <<insert business name/owner/operator>>

Please be advised that there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 in your workplace.

The individual was potentially infectious between the below dates:

__/__/__ to __/__/__

- The individual was not in your workplace during the period of infectivity.
- The individual was in your workplace during the period of infectivity. No close contacts were identified. No further action is required from your workplace.
- The individual was in your workplace during the period of infectivity. Close contacts have been identified and notified by public health officials. No further action is required from your workplace.
- The individual was in your workplace during the period of infectivity. Public health officials will be contacting you for further discussion of recommendations for your workplace.

Be assured that public health investigations to identify individuals who may have been exposed begin within 24 hours of a confirmed laboratory test. Any employee identified as a close contact is contacted directly by public health officials and provided instructions for self-isolation (quarantine). Close contacts are defined as anyone within two metres/ six feet of the case for 15 minutes or more during the period of communicability.

Public health officials will contact you should they require any additional information to assess the risk to employees or the public, or if any other measures need to be taken by the workplace to reduce the risk of transmission.

If a risk to the general public is identified, the public will be notified via the daily media bulletin and the information will be posted online at: www.manitoba.ca/covid19/updates/flights.html. You will be notified if this is required.

If the public health investigation determines that there was no risk of exposure in the workplace, public health officials will not contact you.

Cases and contacts do not require a negative test result to return to work. Provided cases no longer have a fever and their condition has improved, they can stop isolation as early as 10 days from the start of their symptoms. Contacts will be advised that they can stop self-isolating 14 days after their last known contact with a confirmed case, provided they have not developed any symptoms of COVID-19 during the 14-day self-isolation (quarantine) period. Public health officials will be in daily contact with cases and contacts, and will provide direction to them on when it is safe to stop isolating and return to work.

Continue to advise employees to complete the daily symptom and exposure screening questions (www.manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf) before coming to work, and advise them that if they develop symptoms, even if they are mild, they are to immediately isolate themselves from others, and call Health Links – Info Santé for information on testing, assessment and duration of isolation.

Please note: Under privacy legislation, your workplace is not permitted to release the name or any identifying information about the confirmed case of COVID-19 to any member of the workplace, community or media.

More information for workplaces is available at <<insert website link>>, including draft template letters to notify employees in your workplace, should that be desired.

For more information, please visit; manitoba.ca/covid19/updates/resources.html.

Sincerely,