

# COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Public Health Guidance for Shelters

## Supporting the health and safety of residents and staff

March 26, 2020

This document provides guidance on the prevention and management of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in shelters. Shelters include facilities that provide temporary or longer-term residence for homeless individuals and families.

**The COVID-19 pandemic is changing all the time. This information may change. Please visit Southwestern Public Health's website ([www.swpublichealth.ca/](http://www.swpublichealth.ca/)) for updates and more information.**

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## What you should do:

### Active screening

At daily check-in, all clients should be asked the following questions upon arrival at the shelter. Clients staying in longer-term accommodations should be screened daily during their stay. Anyone who answers "Yes" to one or both questions should be placed in a part of the building (or a private room), away from other clients if possible. Those who answer "No" to both questions can be assigned to the general area.

1. Do you have any of the following symptoms:
  - fever/feverish,
  - new or existing cough, or
  - difficulty breathing
2. Have you travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days?
3. Have you had contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19?

### Recommendations for clients and staff

- Clients and staff should be advised to practice good hand hygiene (e.g., frequent hand washing, alcohol-based hand sanitizer) and respiratory etiquette (e.g., sneezing into a bent elbow or disposable tissue).

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- Clients and staff should be advised to maintain a distance of 1 to 2 metres (6.5 feet) from other clients and staff and consider using plastic or glass separators.
- Clients and staff should be advised not to share food, drinks, or other items.

## Recommendations for routine cleaning and disinfecting

- Routine cleaning followed by disinfection is a best practice to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Facilities should follow their protocols for routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Commonly used cleaners and disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. Check the expiry date before using cleaners and disinfectants, and always follow the manufacturer's directions for use to ensure their effectiveness.
- Consider increasing routine cleaning and disinfecting in the part of the building where clients with respiratory symptoms are residing.
- In addition to routine cleaning, high-touch surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected twice per day and when visibly dirty. Examples of high-touch surfaces include doorknobs, handrails, light switches, toilet handles, and faucet handles.
- High-touch electronic devices (e.g., tablets, computer keyboards, telephones) can be disinfected with 70% alcohol (e.g., disposable alcohol wipes).
- Gloves should be worn when handling cleaning and disinfectant products.

Refer to Public Health Ontario: Environmental Cleaning Factsheet: (<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>)

*Adapted with permission from MLHU*

**For more information about COVID-19 visit [www.swpublichealth.ca](http://www.swpublichealth.ca)**