



PUBLIC HEALTH MEMO

COVID-19

COVID-19: Interim Guidance for Shelters

This interim document guides the prevention and management of COVID-19 in shelters. Shelters include facilities that provide temporary, or longer-term residence, for homeless individuals and families.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly, and this guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit website (www.wechu.org) regularly for updates and additional information.

Active Screening

- All clients – including those who are staying in longer-term accommodations – should be asked the following questions upon arrival at the shelter, or at daily check-ins:
 1. Do you have any of the following symptoms: fever, a new or worsening cough, or difficulty breathing?
 2. Have you travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days?
- Anyone who answers “**YES**” to one or both of these questions should be given a surgical mask and placed in a private room or separate part of the building, or private room, away from other clients, if possible. The individual should then contact the WECHU at 519-258-2146 ext. 1420.
- Those who answer “**NO**” to both questions can be assigned to the general area.

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).
- Clients and staff should be advised to practice social distancing as much as possible and maintain a distance of 2 meters 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 personal 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 regular 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 areas 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).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- All clients with respiratory symptoms should wear a surgical facemask.
- PPE is **not required** for administrative staff who do not have direct contact with clients.
- Staff in close contact (caring for or living with someone) with clients who have respiratory symptoms should wear a surgical facemask and disposable gloves.

References:

1. Public Health Ontario. Technical Bulletin: Updated IPAC Recommendations for Use of Personal Protective Equipment for Care of Individuals with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19 [internet]. [cited 2020 Mar 17]. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/updated-ipac-measures-covid-19.pdf?la=en>