

Health and Safety Guidelines for the COVID-19 Pandemic

This guidance document can be used to develop safe work procedures in areas on-campus. Area managers should consult with their Joint Health and Safety Committees for developing any specific procedures for their areas. Managers may also contact their area's Health and Safety Officer(s) and/or the Health and Safety Advisor for assistance at any point.

For the purposes of this document, the term "employee" refers to all faculty, staff, instructors, and anyone who is defined as a "worker" under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The term "manager" includes: "management supervisor" for staff; "academic administrator" (i.e., Chair, Director, Office of the Dean, or principal Investigator) for faculty members, instructional and other academic employees; and anyone who is defined as a supervisor under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The term "University Community Members" means all students, staff, faculty, instructors, volunteers, and members of a governing body of York University

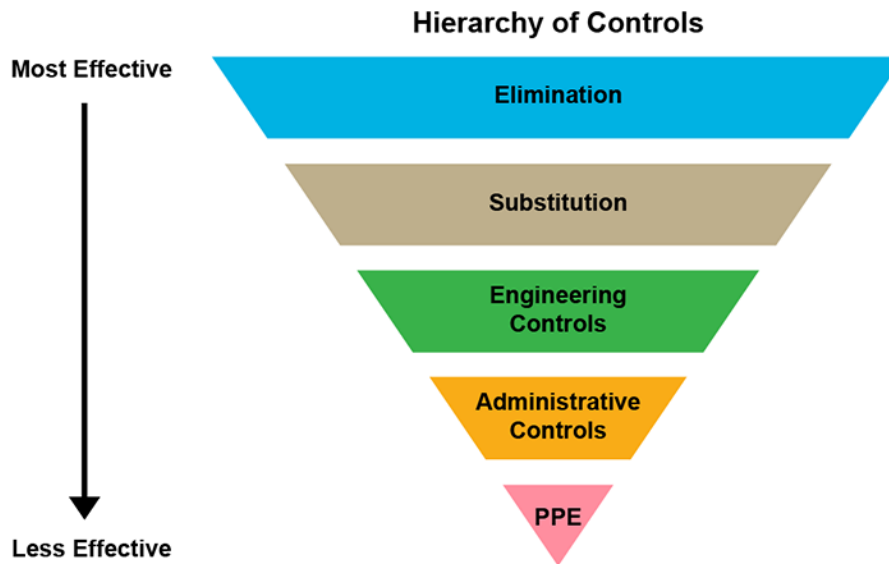
University community members and guests to York's campuses are required to follow public health and safety measures, including what is outlined in this guideline.

Spread of COVID-19

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2 (Public Health Agency of Canada, [PHAC](#)). The primary routes of transmission of COVID-19 (including variants of concern) are close contact with aerosols or respiratory droplets from an infected person and/or indirect contact with contaminated surfaces or items. It can take up to 14 days for people to start showing symptoms. For symptom screening or self-assessment, please use [YU Screen](#). It is important to note that transmission can occur even when individuals are not showing symptoms (i.e., asymptomatic).

Hierarchy of Controls

The application of the Hierarchy of Controls is a recognized approach to containment of hazards. Levels of control include elimination and substitution and involves: elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative, then personal protective equipment (PPE), and the highest levels of controls are considered the most effective at mitigating the risk of exposures, compared to the lowest level of control. This model for protecting against hazards, such as COVID-19, will be applied where feasible. It is important to know that PPE is the least effective in protection and should always be used only when other options are not available.



Following the hierarchy of controls, below are some strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19 including, but not limited to:

- Not attending campus if unwell (elimination)
- Enhanced ventilation (engineering controls)
- Signage (administrative controls)
- Non-fitted masks and fitted masks (ex. PPE)

More information regarding these and other measures is provided below.

1. General Strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

- Self-assess for symptoms, and stay at home or leave campus immediately if unwell. All university community members and guests are encouraged to use [YU Screen](#) as a self-assessment tool.
- Follow the recommendations of government and the public health agencies regarding self-monitoring and self-isolation.
- It is strongly recommended that the York community mask voluntarily in all indoor settings except when eating or drinking. Physical distancing is encouraged where it is reasonable, especially where masks are removed (e.g., while eating or drinking).
- Frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.
- Frequent handwashing with soap and water.
- Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when handwashing facilities are unavailable.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues. Dispose of used facial tissues immediately. If you do not have a facial tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Speak to your Manager or other applicable personnel for tasks that may require PPE (e.g., medical or procedural masks, face shields, goggles).
- University community members and guests are encouraged to consistently adhere to good hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical distancing where reasonable.

- York University encourages all community members to receive a full COVID-19 vaccination series, as well as third or fourth doses when eligible. University community members are encouraged to keep their vaccination status up to date on YU Screen.

2. Screening, Self-Disclosure and Incident Management Protocol

This [protocol](#) provides information and guidance to university community members, contractors, visitors, and managers overseeing areas/teams with respect to self-disclosure of COVID-19, screening practices and incident management processes..

University community members and guests should self-assess for symptoms prior to attending campus, and are not permitted to attend campus, or must leave campus immediately, if unwell. [YU Screen](#) remains available for self-assessment, and those who fail screening will receive follow up from their respective case and contact management divisions with further guidance and information on symptoms, isolation periods and accommodation needs. Community members who disclose a positive test result to their Manager and/or Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being (HSEWB) should be directed to complete [YU Screen](#) and await follow up. Personal health information will remain confidential.

3. Respiratory Etiquette

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus with general prevention measures indicated above. Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately throw the tissue in the garbage and wash your hands. If you do not have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve or arm to prevent the spread of respiratory droplets. York strongly recommends that all university community members and guests voluntarily wear a well-fitted mask while indoors on York's campuses.

4. Handwashing/Hand sanitizing

Handwashing remains one of the most effective ways of preventing transmission and protecting individuals from respiratory viruses, including COVID-19. Proper handwashing helps prevent the transfer of the COVID-19 virus from surface to surface, and from contaminated surfaces or materials to the hands and subsequently to other parts of the body – particularly the eyes, nose and mouth.

University community members are reminded to wash their hands frequently with soap and water, thoroughly, for at least 20 seconds, scrubbing the backs of the hands, between the fingers and under the fingernails. Dry hands completely afterward. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when handwashing facilities are unavailable.

Hand sanitizers have been installed on York's campuses in high traffic, public circulation areas such as entrances, service counters, elevator lobbies and outside washrooms, as determined by risk assessment in approved space use on campus. It is encouraged that community members carry a personal supply of hand sanitizer if they intend to use it in other spaces on campus.

5. Physical Distancing

York does not require but continues to encourage physical distancing (maintaining a 2-metre distance from others) where it is reasonable. It is especially encouraged where masks are removed (e.g., while eating or drinking)

6. Shared Spaces

Designated Meeting Spaces

To ensure all in-person meeting participants remain safe, the following measures should be applied in shared meeting spaces:

- Meeting attendees are encouraged to give space to one another where reasonable, and especially in those instances where masks may be removed. It is strongly recommended that a well-fitted mask is worn by attendees.
- Increase cleaning frequency for high touched and shared surfaces.

Designated Eating Spaces

Departments may designate additional spaces within their areas for the consumption of meals and packed lunches, such as employee lounges, kitchenettes, meeting rooms or closed-door offices. As masks may be removed for eating and drinking, these areas should adhere to additional practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Some recommended practices include:

- Physical distancing where it is reasonable or possible.
- Consider use of outdoor spaces or open areas that are available and weather permitting, if possible.
- Increase cleaning frequency for high touched and shared surfaces.

Important tips for eating and drinking:

- Please wash or disinfect hands before/after eating or drinking.
- Sharing of food/utensils is not recommended and should be avoided.
- Please clean/disinfect tables, microwaves, and other commonly handled items before/after use.
- Please dispose of garbage promptly.

7. Masks

Properly wearing a well-fitted mask is one of several public health measures used to reduce the spread and contamination of aerosols and/or respiratory droplets.

It is strongly recommended to wear masks in all indoor spaces at York University.

Indoor university spaces include: lobbies, elevators, hallways and corridors, stairwells, washrooms, service desks, cafeterias and lunchrooms, common areas in residences, study lounges, meeting rooms, classrooms, research and teaching labs, shared or open-space offices, and other locations used in common, particularly where practicing physical distancing may be difficult or unpredictable.

All York community members are strongly recommended to wear a mask in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin before entering an indoor space. Review the [Mask Information Sheet](#) for more information on how to safely wear and remove a mask.

Masks may still be required in certain situations, as per [public health requirements](#). Please continue to review applicable public health guidance for the most current information regarding masking.

8. Face shields

A face shield is a device that has a transparent window or visor supported in front of the face that provides a barrier of protection to the eyes, nose and lips. A face shield is not an alternative to a mask as it does not protect others from your respiratory particles. A face shield may be worn with a mask as added protection for the wearer. They are an alternative to other acceptable forms of eye protection, such as goggles or safety glasses with side shields.

9. Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are items worn to provide a barrier to help prevent potential exposure. At York, pre-existing procedures surrounding the use of PPE will continue based on the activities that are usually conducted (e.g., research, handling chemicals, etc.)

- Follow the requirements and/or recommendations for wearing masks, as applicable to your task(s). A face shield does not provide equivalent protection as a mask. A mask should be worn, and if needed, a face shield or goggles on top of that.
- Gloves are not required for COVID-19 prevention as proper hand washing is sufficient. However, gloves must be worn when it is anticipated that hands will come into contact with mucous membranes, broken skin, tissue, blood, bodily fluids, secretions, excretions, contaminated equipment or environmental surfaces.
- Additional PPE may need to be worn (e.g., eye protection, goggles or a face shield) while in close proximity/contact with others, as determined by the health and safety risk assessment.

Where procedures are developed specific to COVID-19, training and education needs to be provided to applicable staff and faculty, including the safe use of PPE.

Employees and, where applicable, students should follow existing PPE protocols for performing tasks (e.g., contact with people experiencing homelessness on campus, Community Safety Security Services responding to medical calls, those in contact with animals for research etc.).

Employees should follow standard operating procedures and label directions for all cleaning products and other chemicals used for disinfection in their respective area(s).

Area / Activity on Campus	Procedures to follow	Additional Resources
Labs, studios/shops and other types of work/study/research spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue following pre-existing procedures surrounding the use of PPE based on the work activities that are performed Additional and/or alternate COVID-19 plans that have been put in place by the areas/Faculties/departments should also be followed to ensure added precautions for health and safety of personnel. 	
Faculty/Instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks are strongly recommended to be worn in all indoor spaces. If a mask is not worn or removed during teaching, it is encouraged to maintain 2-metres physical distance from others, where reasonable. 	
Cleaning and disinfecting (Facility Services / Custodial staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fit-tested N95 respirators may be required for certain tasks. When Facility Services staff are cleaning the area/surfaces associated with a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case, surgical or procedural mask and eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield), gloves and disposable coveralls must be used. Manufacturer instructions must be followed for donning and doffing PPE. When cleaning, it is important that disinfectants used are not sprayed onto surfaces. Instead, wipe surface down with a cloth soaked/saturated with an adequate disinfectant solution. For full effectiveness, allow enough contact time prior, as per the disinfectant. 	Where N95 respirators are required, York's Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.
Dons (Residences) - Cleaning of bodily fluids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fit-tested N95 respirators Eye Protection (goggles, safety glasses) 	Where N95 respirators are required, York's Respiratory Protection Program must be

- Any other work activity involving isolation rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protective coveralls (e.g., tyvex suiting) • Hand Protection (gloves) 	followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.
Housing Staff – Maintenance and Custodial Staff (Any work activity involving isolation rooms e.g., cleaning, repairs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-tested N95 respirators • Eye Protection (goggles, safety glasses) • Protective coveralls (e.g., tyvex suiting) • Hand Protection (gloves) 	Where N95 respirators are required, York’s Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.
Facilities Maintenance (Any work activity involving isolation rooms e.g., repairs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-tested N95 respirators • Eye Protection (goggles, safety glasses) • Protective coveralls (e.g., tyvex suiting) • Hand Protection (gloves) 	Where N95 respirators are required, York’s Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.
Security Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow existing PPE protocols for responding to medical calls • If responding to a sick individual, wear appropriate N95 mask if available and fit-tested, otherwise a medical mask should be worn. The individual suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 should be instructed to wear a surgical or procedural mask • If entering an isolation room with a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case, wear appropriate fit-tested N95 mask, Eye Protection (goggles, safety glasses), Protective coveralls (e.g., tyvex suiting) and Hand Protection (gloves) 	Where N95 respirators are required, York’s Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.

10. Training and Communication

All York employees must do the following:

- Review any and all education and training information posted on YU Link/YU Learn regarding COVID-19.
- Stay up to date with public health guidance and York University guidance.

Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being, Human Resources
hsewb@yorku.ca, ext. 55491

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Applicable signage related to COVID-19 will be posted.

11. Enhanced Ventilation and Air Filtration

In response to COVID-19, Facilities Services have improved airflow in buildings by installing high quality filtration products, to protect against airborne COVID-19 virus particles. Facilities Services continue to maintain and service HVAC systems as required. All academic buildings have mechanical ventilation in place to allow fresh air to be circulated. Upgrades focused on maximizing the amount of fresh air that the systems can handle. Systems are run 24/7 to improve air flow.

Time is allowed for the air in classroom spaces to be purged before students arrive and after they leave. Facilities Services also use air filters similar to those found in hospitals, especially in highly occupied buildings. These filters are being replaced at a higher rate of frequency for increased health and safety protection. Facilities Services also follow the latest recommendations and guidance set by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers.

For further information, refer to [Facilities Services' page](#).

12. Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

i. Common/shared surfaces

Cleaning practices are to be performed in accordance with the applicable Toronto Public Health Guidelines, by dedicated cleaning staff. More information on Custodial Services at York can be found here: <https://www.yorku.ca/facilities/>.

Cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces and shared objects will be done frequently and when visibly dirty. Shared environmental surfaces include commonly touched surfaces such as sinks/faucets, toilets, electronics (computers and peripherals e.g., printers, keyboards, mice, touch screens and controls), equipment (e.g., tools, machines), furniture and other fixed items, such as plexiglass barriers, counter tops, stairway rails, floors, elevators, and walls. Cleaning of shared environmental surfaces will be determined by area management.

Outdoor spaces that are open for use, such as parking lots, grounds etc., will be monitored and cleaned as required (e.g., discarded gloves, masks, litter).

Cleaning and disinfecting of staff/student washrooms and other areas will be done as necessary throughout the day to maintain sanitation. Hydration stations are cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day and signage emphasizing public health measures are posted near hydration stations. All persons are encouraged to fill water bottles rather than drinking directly from the mouthpiece of water fountains.

ii. Shared Tools/Equipment

- Proper hand washing is the most effective way in preventing the transfer of the COVID-19 virus from surface to surface, from the contaminated surface or material to the hands and then to other parts of the body, particularly the eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoiding or reducing the sharing of tools/equipment (where possible) is considered the most effective control measure. Where this is not possible, cleaning/disinfecting the hand tools/equipment that workers will be touching will add another layer of protection.
- Specific details on tool/machine sharing and cleaning will be determined by the area management, as per the risk assessment.
- Always wash your hands before touching your face or eating, or before getting into your vehicle to go home, regardless of other precautions taken.
- Disinfectant solutions must be prepared and used according to the manufacturer's recommendations for concentration, volume and contact time.
- Products used for cleaning and disinfection should follow manufacturers' recommendations and safety data sheet when preparing and handling safely, and appropriate PPE should be used to avoid chemical exposures.
 - Staff (drivers and passengers) operating or using university vehicles whether owned, leased or rented are strongly recommended to wear a mask. Consider asking passengers to sit in the back to maintain physical distance.
 - Consider improving fresh air circulation using the vehicle climate control system and opening windows.
 - Avoid the recirculated air option.

Accessibility

Managers should consider and plan for university community members with special needs (e.g., accessible COVID-19 information and resources for those who are hearing- or visually-impaired). Managers are encouraged to reach out to their Health and Safety Advisors as needed.

Other Resources

- [Mental Health and Well-being – resources](#)
- [EFAP](#)
- [Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being, Respiratory Protection Program](#)
- Infrastructure Health & Safety Association (IHSA) [Guidance](#) on Tool Sharing (Hand Tools) Constructor/Employer Procedure during COVID-19
- YU Better Together <https://www.yorku.ca/bettertogether/>website

Referenced documents

- [York University COVID-19 Protocol for Self Disclosure, Screening and Incident Management](#)

- [HR-HSEWB Website: COVID-19 Processes & Procedures](#)

References

- Toronto Public Health COVID-19 Guidance: Employers, Businesses & Organizations. Retrieved from: <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-reopening-recovery-rebuild/covid-19-reopening-guidelines-for-businesses-organizations/covid-19-guidance-employers-workplaces-businesses/>
- Government of Canada COVID-19 Website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- Public Health Ontario, Interim IPAC recommendations for use of personal protective equipment for care of individuals with suspect or confirmed COVID-19. Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/updated-ipac-measures-covid-19.pdf?la=en>
- Public Health Ontario, Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=enT>
- Toronto Public Health: COVID-19 & Respiratory Viruses: Reduce Virus Spread Guide. Retrieved from: <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-reduce-virus-spread/?accordion=face-masks-respirators>
- CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>