

Health and Safety Guidelines for Returning to Campus during the COVID-19 Pandemic

York University's plan for reopening lays out an institutional approach to reopening the campuses in alignment with the government's approach. As departments and Faculties begin to make their plans to return all/part of their areas to York's campuses and locations during the COVID-19 pandemic, this guidance document can be used to develop safe work procedures in areas that will be occupied (e.g., classrooms, washrooms, residence spaces, offices, research/lab spaces, libraries and other public areas within York campuses).

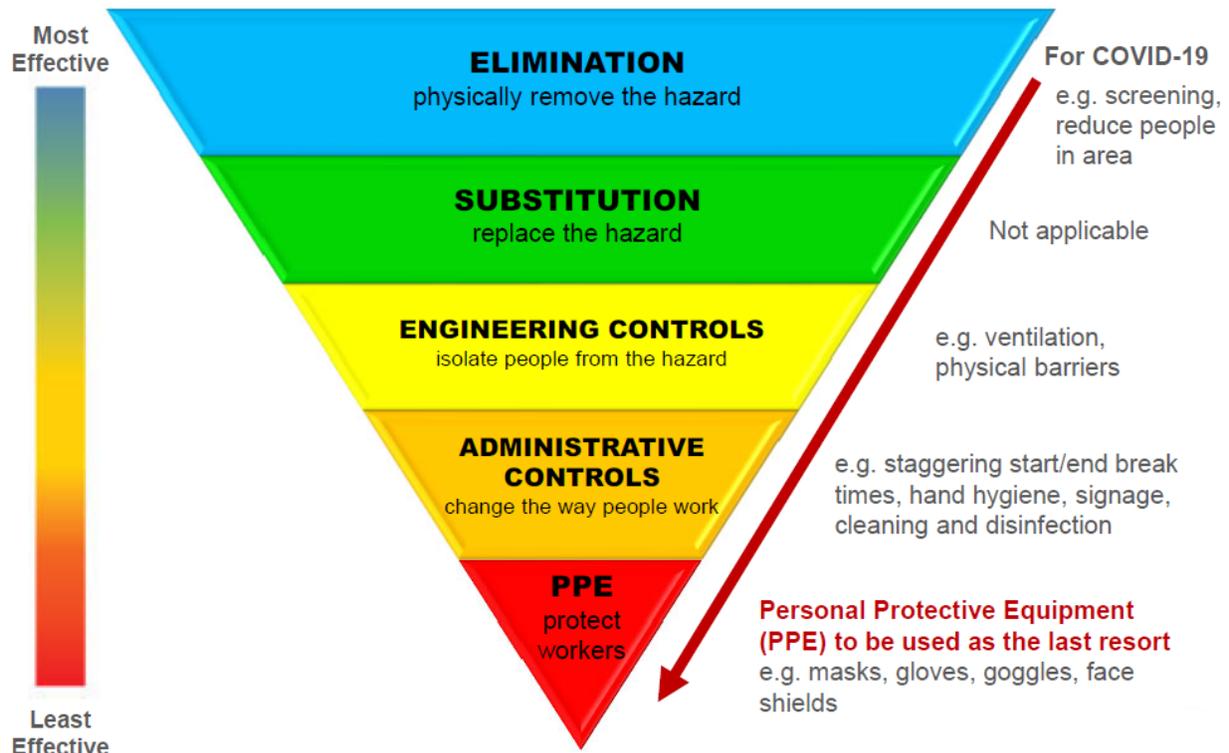
This document should be used as a guide to complete the [COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment Form](#) by area management in consultation with Joint Health and Safety Committees and employees (where applicable) to develop specific procedures as part of continuity and resumption planning. Regular reviews of health and safety procedures and inspections (including conversations between area management and employees following them) should take place to ensure ongoing effectiveness. Involved parties should keep current and comply with provincial orders, City of Toronto directives and by-laws, as well as [Reopening Ontario](#) sector-specific guidance. Management Supervisors may contact their area's Health and Safety Officer(s) and/or the Health and Safety Advisor for assistance at any point.

Spread of COVID-19

The primary routes of transmission of COVID-19 (including variants of concern) are close contact with respiratory droplets and aerosols (smaller droplets) created 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 detailed symptoms, go to [York University's 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 (i.e. elimination, substitution engineering, administrative, then personal protective equipment [PPE]) is a recognized approach to containment of hazards, where the levels of control at the highest (elimination and substitution) are considered the most effective at mitigating the risk of exposures, compared to the lowest level of control (i.e. between the worker and the hazard, such as PPE). This fundamental method for protecting employees 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.



In addition to the hierarchy of controls, below are some general strategies:

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

- Stay at home when sick
- Follow the recommendations of the government and public health agencies regarding self-monitoring and self-isolation
- Maintain a 2-metre physical distance from others or by using a barrier
- Frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces. Enhanced cleaning protocols will be put in place for areas returning to campus
- 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 or into your sleeves. Dispose of used facial tissues immediately. If you do not have a facial tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow
- Speak to your Management Supervisor for tasks that may require PPE (e.g., medical or procedural masks, face shields, goggles), where 2-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained
- Masks or face coverings alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. Employees must consistently and strictly adhere to good hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical distancing.

2. Screening, Self-Disclosure and Incident Management Protocol

This protocol provides information and guidance to students, employees, faculty, contractors, visitors, and managers overseeing areas/teams with respect to self-disclosure of COVID-19, screening practices and incident management processes. For details of this protocol, visit <https://yubettertogether.info.yorku.ca/important-links-resources/>.

Employees, students, contractors and visitors should go to [YU Screen](#), to complete a daily screening before arriving on campus. They must be “cleared” and report their status with management, as per department process. If symptoms develop during the day, they must leave campus immediately and update the status on YU Screen by doing the screening tool again. Management supervisors are required to verify and document that those coming onto campus have cleared screening. Records are to be kept for at least 30 days as per guidance provided by [TPH](#) for post-secondary institutions.

Employees are also encouraged to download the Government of Canada’s [COVID Alert mobile app](#) to get notified if they may have been exposed to COVID-19, and let their Management Supervisor and Employee Well-being know if they test positive without disclosure of any personal information.

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. In addition, continue to wear a mask or face covering in all indoor spaces.

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.

Employees 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 will be provided by York University 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

Physical distancing has proven to be an effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing means keeping a distance of 2 metres from others in indoor and outdoor spaces. This practice requires making changes in everyday routines to minimize close contact with others, for example, avoid congregating in larger numbers, crowded places and gatherings. Applicable measures will need to be put in place in occupied spaces (e.g., classrooms, buildings, entrances/exits) to accommodate for proper physical distancing. Where physical distancing is not possible, the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) must be worn. See section 9 on PPE below.

6. Shared Spaces

Areas that are shared such as office spaces or common areas such as kitchenettes, lunch/break rooms need to adhere to additional practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Some recommended precautions include:

- Physical distancing (e.g., placement of furniture, dining tables and chairs)
- No congregation
- Duration of use
- Signage and markings to control traffic flow
- Staggering lunch/break periods as applicable
- Adequate ventilation (refer to HVAC section below)
- Use any outdoor spaces or open areas that are available and weather permitting, if possible
- Increase cleaning frequency for high touched and shared surfaces

[COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment](#) will need to be conducted by Management Supervisors to ensure applicable health and safety measures have been put in place.

7. Mask or Face Coverings

Wearing a mask or face covering is another way to prevent any respiratory droplets and aerosols from spreading to others or contaminating surfaces.

It is mandatory to wear masks or face coverings in all indoor spaces at York University. The mask/face covering is also required outdoors whenever physical distancing cannot be maintained. All persons should wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin when entering and for the duration of their stay, unless an exemption applies. Indoor spaces include, but are not limited to, classrooms, administrative buildings, offices, meeting rooms, common areas in all residences, washrooms, corridors and elevators.

Signage on the proper use and how to safely put on and take off masks or face coverings are posted in visible areas. More information can be found at [York University's Mask and Face Covering Protocol](#) and [Mask or Face Covering FAQs](#).

Although **not considered a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**, a mask or face covering is used as a source control and can decrease the chance that others come into contact with your respiratory droplets and aerosols, which can reduce/prevent the transmission to others, just like coughing into your sleeve or into a tissue.

It is an extra step that can protect others around you. Masks or face coverings are meant to protect other people in case the wearer is unknowingly infected but does not have symptoms. It is critical to continue to follow public health measures and university directions as described above in General Strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It is important to understand that mask or face covering have limitations and need to be used safely. When using a mask or face covering:

- Wash your hands before putting it on and immediately after taking it off
- Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth) with unwashed hands
- Ensure the cover fits well to enable the air flow through the mask and not around it
- Do not share your mask or face covering with others
- Change your mask or face covering if it becomes moist or dirty
- Ensure the mask or face covering is washed (e.g., use hot water cycle and dryer) after use.
- It should not be used by anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- It should only be removed for eating and drinking in designated areas (i.e., not while waiting for the microwave) or as needed to take medication.

Follow the [Face Covering Information Sheet](#) on how to use a mask or face covering properly and understand its limitations.

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. Face shields can be used as PPE to provide eye protection, in addition to surgical masks. They are an alternative to other acceptable forms of eye protection, such as goggles or safety glasses with side shields.

Do not use face shields in place of masks. There is insufficient evidence that face shields used without a mask are suitable for use as source control masking or PPE. A mouth shield, or other device that provides a barrier of protection to only the mouth and nose, is not a face shield or a mask and should not be used as source control or as PPE.

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.)

COVID-19 spreads by respiratory droplets and aerosols of an infected person to others with whom they have been in close contact with. For infection prevention and control purposes, **droplet precautions** are required. Droplet precautions for tasks performed at York include:

- If able to maintain physical distance of at least 2 metres or separation by physical barrier at the workplace, **no PPE is required**. Follow the requirements for wearing masks and face coverings. A face shield does not provide equivalent protection to a mask. A mask should be worn, and then if needed, a face shield or goggle on top of that.

- Employees should wash their hands regularly using soap and water for at least 20 seconds; where this is not possible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer comprised of at least 60% alcohol
- 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.
- Eye protection such as goggles or a face shield should be worn, when unable to maintain 2-metre physical distance from individuals not wearing mask or face coverings or 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 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, contact with animals for research).

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. 	Refer to Employee Return to Campus Checklist for Labs/Research/Machine Shops for further details.
Faculty/teaching staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgical or procedural mask and eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shield) should be used if teaching in a classroom where students are not masked, and 2-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained to allow for two-way protection for the employees. 	
Cleaning and disinfecting (Facilities / Custodial staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of N95 respirators are not required. N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings or for other tasks where N95 respirators are required • When Facilities Services staff are cleaning the area/surfaces 	Where N95 respirators are used, York's Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.

	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	
Security Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow existing PPE protocols for responding to medical calls • When caring for a sick individual or someone showing symptoms of illness wear disposable gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shield) and a surgical or procedural mask • The individual suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 should be instructed to wear a surgical or procedural mask • An N95 respirator is not required. N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings or for other tasks where N95 respirators are required. 	Where N95 respirators are used, 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 who are authorized by their department and required to return to campus during the stages of re-opening will take the [Return to Campus – COVID-19](#) mandatory training **prior** to coming onto campus. Taking this training does not permit anyone to go on campus. Employees/ faculty will receive specific information about return to campus through their Management Supervisor.

Signage on COVID-19 will be posted in high traffic areas such as lobbies, shared laundry areas, and other relevant common areas as appropriate to raise awareness about COVID-19 and to encourage healthy behaviours.

11. Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

In response to COVID-19, Facility Services continue to maintain, and service HVAC systems as required. They have implemented various initiatives and measures to enhance ventilation and circulation within occupied York workspaces.

12. Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

i. Common/shared surfaces

Cleaning practices are to be performed as required by the applicable Toronto Public Health Guidelines, by dedicated cleaning staff.

Cleaning and disinfecting 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.

Select perimeter parking lots will be closed, with signage posted with lot status. 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.

For more information on custodial service offerings at York: <https://www.yorku.ca/facilities/>

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 reduction in 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.

Additional Information

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

More information can be found in [WHO's Interim Guidance Document on Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces](#) in the context of COVID-19 and IHSA'S Guidance on Tool Sharing-Constructor/Employer Procedure during COVID-19

Toronto Public Health Guidance for Post-Secondary Institutions includes additional guidance with specific measures and precautions that can be considered, based on the tasks and activities conducted for the following areas:

- Classrooms and Labs
- Facility Services
- On-campus dining/restaurants
- Student placements
- Athletics and Recreation
- Music
- Campus amenities
- Residences
- Events and gatherings
- Libraries
- International students and staff
- Campus clubs

Management Supervisors can access the [latest public health guidance](#) with respect to their area-specific operations. They should implement appropriate measures to ensure the health and safety of staff and faculty. Management Supervisors are encouraged to reach out to their Health and Safety Advisors as needed.

Accessibility

Management Supervisors should consider and plan for students and employees with special needs (e.g., accessible COVID-19 information and resources for those who are hearing-impaired, or visually-impaired).

Other Resources

- [Top 12 Ways York is Welcoming YU Back](#)
- [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:
<https://www.ihsa.ca/pdfs/alerts/COVID19/guidance-on-tool-sharing-constructor-employer-procedure-during-covid-19.pdf>

Referenced documents

- [Employee Return to Campus Checklist for Labs/Research/Machine Shops](#)
- [COVID-19 Health and Safety Risk Assessment Form](#)
- [Return to Campus COVID-19 Training](#)
- [YU-Better website](#)
- [York U COVID-19 Protocol for Self-Disclosure, Screening and Incident Management](#)
- [Government of Canada COVID-19 Alert App](#)

References

- Toronto Public Health COVID-19 Guidance for Post-Secondary Institutions ([March 24, 2021](#))
- [Government of Canada COVID-19 Website](#)
- [Public Health Ontario, Updated IPAC recommendations for use of personal protective equipment for care of individuals with suspect or confirmed COVID-19.](#)
- [Public Health Ontario, Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings \(April 29, 2021\).](#)
- [Toronto Public Health, IPAC Practice and Disinfection Guidance for Commercial or Residential Buildings \(June 30, 2021\).](#)
- [York University website](#)
- [WHO Interim Guidance Document on Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces in the context of COVID-19.](#)