

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

York University's plan for re-opening lays out an institutional approach for the campuses in alignment with the guidance and requirements of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, provincial government (including Ministry of Health, Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development), and Toronto Public Health.

As divisions, departments and Faculties return to all or 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., instructional spaces, 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 COVID-19 response, resumption and continuity. 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 and/or Toronto Public Health directives and by-laws, as well as the *Reopening Ontario Act (O. Reg. 364/20)* and the sector sector-specific guidance contained within O. Reg. 364/20.. Managers may 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 guidance 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; and "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 are required to follow public health and safety measures, including what is outlined in this guideline.

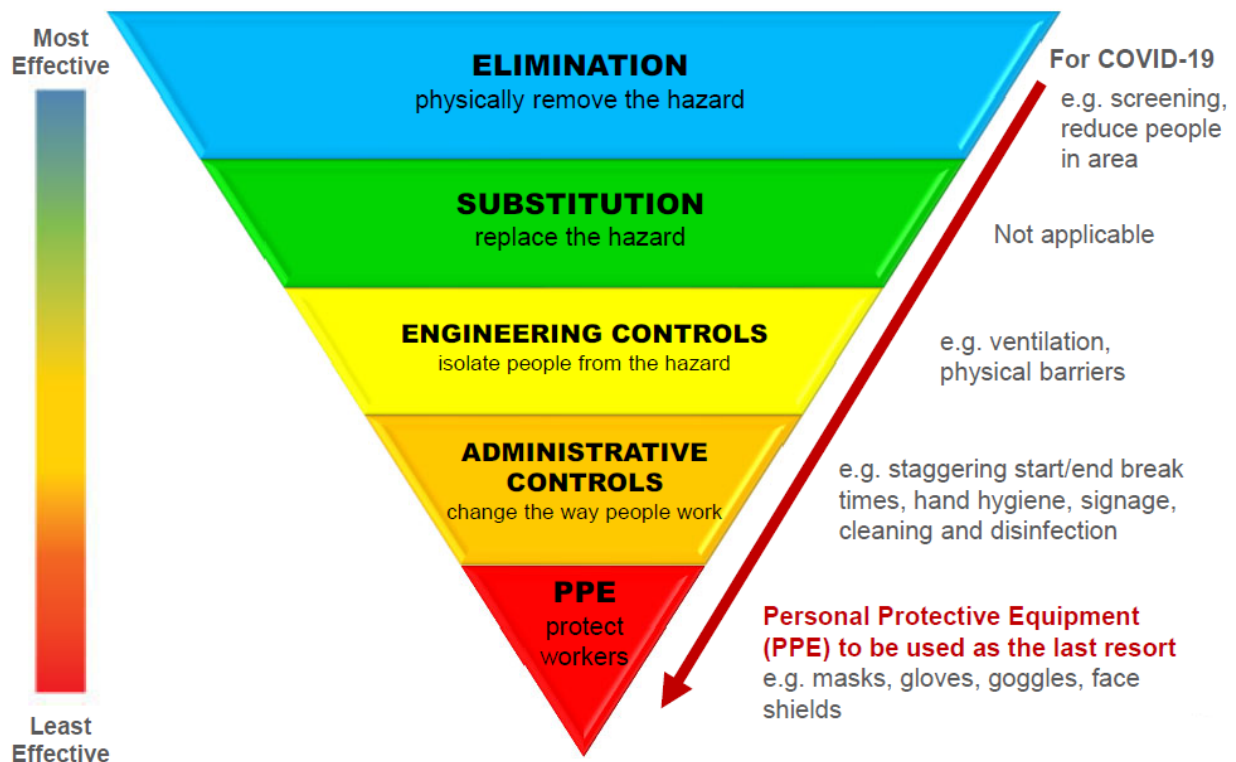
Spread of COVID-19

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 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 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.



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 the public health agencies regarding self-monitoring and self-isolation;
- Unless otherwise indicated by the area, York does not require but continues to encourage physical distancing where it is reasonable. It is especially encouraged if masks are removed (e.g., while eating or drinking);

- 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 Manager or other applicable personnel for tasks that may require PPE (e.g., medical or procedural masks, face shields, goggles), in areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained;
- Masks alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. 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 appropriate;
- Require mandatory vaccination when accessing York campuses for in-person activities. Refer to York's [Vaccination Mandate Policy](#)
- University community members and guests must complete and pass daily COVID-19 self-screening prior to coming on campus, via [YU Screen](#). Community members are not permitted to attend campus if they do not pass screening. University community members (including guests) need to be prepared to present their YU Screen clearance screen when asked.

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. For details of this protocol, visit <https://yubettertogether.info.yorku.ca/important-links-resources/>.

University community members and guests should go to [YU Screen](#), to complete a daily self-screening before arriving on campus. University community members and guests must be “cleared” before arriving to campus. University community members (including guests) need to be prepared to present their YU Screen clearance screen when asked. If symptoms develop during the day, community members must leave campus immediately and update their status on YU Screen by completing the screening tool again.

Everyone is 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 Manager and the Health, Safety and Employee Well-Being (HSEWB) office 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. A reminder that university community members must wear a mask on York's campuses while indoors, and when outdoors when physical distance cannot be maintained.

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

Physical distancing, defined as maintaining a 2-metre distance from others, has proven to be an effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As of March 2022, unless indicated otherwise by the area, York does not require but continues to encourage physical distancing where it is reasonable. It is especially encouraged if masks are removed (e.g., while eating or drinking)

6. Shared Spaces

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

Designated Meeting Spaces

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

- Unless otherwise indicated by the area, meeting attendees are encouraged to give space to one another where reasonable, and especially in those instances where masks may be removed. Masks are always worn by attendees, unless actively eating or drinking;
- Spaces are cleaned/disinfected after use;

- Until at least the end of the Winter 2022 term, only active eating and drinking (e.g., a quick sip of a beverage) is permitted, where physical distancing can be maintained

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 will be removed for eating and drinking, these areas need to adhere to additional practices to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Some recommended practices include:

- If indicated by the area, physical distancing where it is reasonable;
- 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; and
- Increase cleaning frequency for high touched and shared surfaces

Important tips for eating and drinking:

- Food may be purchased from on-campus eateries given current COVID-19 safety monitoring at York;
- Wash or disinfect hands before/after eating or drinking ;
- No sharing of food/utensils;
- Clean/disinfect tables, microwaves, and other commonly handled items before/after use;
- Dispose of garbage;
- Remove masks indoors only when actively eating or drinking, then replace immediately afterwards;

7. Masks

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, a method of source control to protect ourselves and others.

As per the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#), while non-medical masks can help prevent COVID-19 spread, medical masks and respirators provide better protection. Non-medical masks are not classified as personal protective equipment (PPE). If a respirator (e.g., N95) is required for a specific job hazard, they are PPE and, as such, fit testing and other Respirator Program requirements should be followed.

Use of a mask alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is one of several measures that work in tandem to protect you and others around you. It is critical to continue to follow further public health measures and university direction, described above in General Strategies, such as screening daily, not coming to campus if symptomatic or feeling unwell, practicing physical distancing where reasonable, and properly washing your hands often.

It is mandatory to wear masks in all indoor spaces at York University. A mask is also required outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained:

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 should wear a mask in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin before entering a location where a mask is required, and for the duration of their stay, unless an accommodation applies (information about accommodations can be found on [Mask FAQs](#)).

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

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

- Properly wash or sanitize your hands immediately before putting the mask on, and practice good hand hygiene while wearing it.
- Secure the disposable mask with the ties or ear loops.
- Adjust the mask to ensure full coverage of the mouth, nose and chin. Use the flexible nosepiece and pinch around nose to secure the upper part of the mask. While holding mask in place at nose, pull the lower part of mask below the chin.
- Proper wear allows for comfortable breathing without restriction.
- The mask should not impair vision or interfere with tasks.
- The mask should not be shared with others.
- Avoid touching your mask, but if you do, make sure to wash or sanitize your hands right after.
- Change your mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled.
- To wash re-usable non-medical cloth masks, put them directly into the washing machine or into a disposable bag that can be emptied into the washing machine.
- Re-useable non-medical cloth masks may be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly.
- Store the mask in a clean paper bag until it is worn.
- Discard disposable masks that cannot be washed, in a plastic-lined garbage bin after use. Kindly do not dispose used masks in the blue recycle bins.

Follow the [Mask Information Sheet](#) on how to use a mask properly and understand its limitations.

A mask should not be placed on or used by:

- Children under two years of age;

- Persons with an underlying medical condition which inhibits their ability to wear a mask;
- Persons who are unable to place or remove a mask without assistance; and
- Persons who require accommodation in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code that precludes the wearing of a mask.

A mask may be temporarily removed under exceptional circumstances. Please refer to the [Mask FAQs](#) guideline for further guidance.

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 aerosols and/or respiratory droplets of an infected person to others with whom they have been in close contact with. Infection prevention and controls are in place to minimize the spread of respiratory droplets. Precautions for tasks performed at York include:

- Follow the requirements 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.
- University community members 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.

- 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. 	Refer to Employee Return to Campus Checklist for Labs/Research/Machine Shops for further details.
Faculty/Instructors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks must be worn in all indoor spaces. However, in very rare and exceptional circumstances, if wearing a mask materially impairs the effectiveness of a teaching activity, the mask can be temporarily removed. Unless otherwise indicated by the area, York does not require but continues to encourage physical distancing where it is reasonable. If a mask must be removed during teaching, it is encouraged to maintain 2-metres physical distance from others. Please put the mask back on as soon as possible. 	

<p>Cleaning and disinfecting (Facility Services / Custodial staff)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-tested N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings or for other tasks where N95 respirators are required • 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 	<p>Where N95 respirators are required, York's Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.</p>
<p>Dons (Residences) - Cleaning of bodily fluids - Any other work activity involving isolation rooms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-tested N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings or for other tasks where N95 respirators are required • Eye Protection (goggles, safety glasses) • Protective coveralls (e.g., tyvex suiting) • Hand Protection (gloves) 	<p>Where N95 respirators are required, York's Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.</p>
<p>Housing Staff – Maintenance and Custodial Staff (Any work activity involving isolation rooms e.g., cleaning, repairs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-tested N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings or for other tasks where N95 respirators are required • Eye Protection (goggles, safety glasses) • Protective coveralls (e.g., tyvex suiting) • Hand Protection (gloves) 	<p>Where N95 respirators are required, York's Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.</p>

<p>Facilities Maintenance</p> <p>(Any work activity involving isolation rooms e.g., repairs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit-tested N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings or for other tasks where N95 respirators are required • Eye Protection (goggles, safety glasses) • Protective coveralls (e.g., tyvex suiting) • Hand Protection (gloves) 	<p>Where N95 respirators are required, York’s Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.</p>
<p>Security Services</p>	<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 • Fit-tested N95 respirators are currently recommended only for specific procedures in health care settings or for other tasks where N95 respirators are required 	<p>Where N95 respirators are required, York’s Respiratory Protection Program must be followed. For example, users must be clean-shaven and fit-tested.</p>

10. Training and Communication

All York employees who are authorized by their department or faculty, required to work on campus must do the following:

- Complete the mandatory one-time [Return to Campus – COVID-19](#) training **prior** to first attending campus.
- Review and stay-up-to-date with any changes communicated via email, by HSEWB, in regards to [Return to Campus – COVID-19](#) training

Taking the [Return to Campus – COVID-19](#) does not immediately permit anyone to go on campus. Employees will receive specific information about return to campus through their Manager.

Signage related to 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 behaviors.

11. Enhanced Ventilation and Air Filtration

In response to COVID-19, Facility 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. Facility 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. Facility 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 YU Better Together [Ventilation page](#).

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.

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 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 must be masked. 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.

Additional Information

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

Managers 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. Managers are encouraged to reach out to their Health and Safety Advisors as needed.

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-impaired, or visually-impaired).

Other Resources

- [A Community of Care Commitment](#)
- [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 8, 2022](#))
- Toronto Public Health COVID-19 Guidance for Workplaces
- [\(March 7, 2022\)](#)Government of Canada COVID-19 Website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
- Public Health Agency of Canada, COVID-19 mask use: Advice for community settings. Retrieved from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>
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- Public Health Ontario, Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings (April 29, 2021). Retrieved from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>
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- CDC: [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility \(Nov 15, 2021\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html). Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- York University website, <https://yubettertogether.info.yorku.ca/>
- WHO Interim Guidance Document on Cleaning and disinfection of environmental surfaces in the context of COVID-19. <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/cleaning-and-disinfection-of-environmental-surfaces-in-the-context-of-covid-19>