



## Schools and teaching environments

COVID-19 Preventive Measures in the Workplace  
Interim Recommendations



Pour des milieux de travail en santé  
Réseau de santé publique  
en santé au travail

August 25, 2020

**This information sheet is intended for employers and workers of different educational settings (preschools, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities) as well as those in settings offering vocational or general training to adults.** It offers recommendations to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and thus protect the health of **all staff members**, including teachers, professionals, support and management staff, etc. **This information sheet does not apply to pupils, students and trainees<sup>1</sup> who are not covered by Québec's Occupational Health and Safety Act (LSST).**

According to current knowledge, COVID-19 can be transmitted by symptomatic, pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals who are carriers of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Therefore, this information sheet contains recommendations that apply at all times when the SARS-CoV-2 virus is in circulation. COVID-19 control measures rely on a [hierarchy of measures](#), which applies to all workplaces.

Special attention must be given to pregnant workers and to those with certain health conditions. Please refer to the following recommendations:

[Travailleurs immunosupprimés](#) [in French only]

[Travailleurs avec maladies chroniques](#) [in French only]

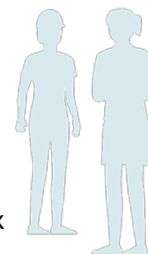
[Pregnant or nursing workers](#)

## Adjustment of work methods and schedules

To protect the health of employees and others in the workplace, employers and workers are asked to adhere to the isolation guidelines (returning travelers, COVID-19 cases, case contacts, etc.) and to take other constraints into account (voluntary school attendance, limited public transit, etc.):

- ▶ Encourage teleworking (working from home) for positions where it is possible.
- ▶ Allow flexible hours for positions where it is possible.

<sup>1</sup> Note that under certain circumstances, trainees and interns may be covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act.



## Triage of symptomatic workers

- ▶ Advise workers not to come to work if they present symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 (see text box below). Establish a strict triage process to access the establishment.
- ▶ A [symptom-based questionnaire](#) can be completed by workers prior to each work shift.
  - ▶ Access must be denied to any worker presenting symptoms suggestive of the disease;
  - ▶ If a worker begins to experience symptoms in the workplace:
    - ▶ Have them wear a quality procedural mask<sup>2</sup> and isolate them in a room designated for this purpose;
    - ▶ Have them call 1-877-644-4545 for instructions;
- ▶ Workers who have been in contact within 2 meters of the symptomatic person without proper protection<sup>3</sup> should self-monitor for symptoms and call 8-1-1 or 1-877-644-4545 if they develop symptoms.
- ▶ For precautions to be taken when a person presents symptoms associated with COVID-19, refer to [Specific measures to be taken by workers in charge of taking care of individuals presenting symptoms associated with COVID-19](#), p.7.

### COVID-19 Symptoms (for workers)

If you have the following symptoms, call 1-877-644-4545:

1 of these symptoms	OR	2 of these symptoms
Onset or worsening of a cough		A general symptom (muscle pain, headache, extreme fatigue or significant loss of appetite)
Fever (temperature of 38°C or higher, taken orally)		Sore throat
Difficulty breathing		Diarrhea
Sudden loss of sense of smell without nasal congestion, with or without loss of sense of taste		

## Hand hygiene

- ▶ Promote and practice hand hygiene by making the necessary equipment available to workers, pupils, students and trainees (running water, soap, hydroalcoholic solutions, touchless trash cans, disposable tissues or paper towels, etc.).
- ▶ Wash hands frequently with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds.

<sup>2</sup> Ideally, masks with compliance testing (ASTM) should be preferred. For details on quality standards and for criteria to help the employer choose the right masks in situations of real or apprehended shortages, refer to the following documents: [Mesures exceptionnelles pour les équipements de protection individuelle lors de pandémie](#) and [Masques chirurgicaux ou de procédures : choix de l'équipement sur le choix des masques de procédure](#) [in French only].

<sup>3</sup> See the section on working within two metres of distance (p. 5) for appropriate protective equipment for workers.



- ▶ Use a hydroalcoholic solution (at least 60% alcohol in content) for at least 20 seconds if soap and water are not available, rubbing all parts of the hands thoroughly until dry.
- ▶ Keep hand sanitizers out of reach of children and always supervise them when using hydroalcoholic solution. If ingested, even small amounts can have serious health consequences. If the product is swallowed, contact Quebec's Poison Control Centre immediately (1-800-463-5060).
- ▶ At a minimum, all workers should be able to wash their hands on entering and leaving work, after blowing their nose or touching their face, before and after breaks, snacks and meals, when using the washroom, and after touching frequently touched surfaces (light switches, door handles, microwaves, handrails, elevators, etc.).
  - ▶ Refer to the information provided by [Health Canada](#) on accepted hand sanitizers.
- ▶ Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth with hands or gloves.
- ▶ Unless otherwise advised, wearing gloves to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 is not recommended as it may produce a false sense of security. Gloves can become contaminated with the virus and thus contaminate the wearer when touching their face or various surfaces in their surroundings.

## Respiratory etiquette

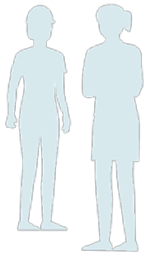
- ▶ Respect and promote respiratory etiquette: coughing into one's bent elbow or into a tissue and blowing one's nose into a tissue that is discarded in a lidded trash can immediately after use, then washing hands as soon as possible.

## Physical distancing and minimization of contacts

- ▶ The more contact there is between different persons, the greater the risk that one of these contacts will be with a contagious person and, therefore, the greater the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Thus, **minimizing the number, frequency and duration of contacts, as well as respecting a physical distance of two metres at all times between all persons are the most effective measures and must be prioritized.**
- ▶ Encourage teleworking whenever possible. When the situation requires or allows it, consider the implementation of online learning activities<sup>4</sup>.
- ▶ Whenever possible, avoid in-person meetings and gatherings. Opt for alternative methods such as videoconferencing, or pre-recorded telephone or video messages. If meetings are absolutely necessary, ensure that people can be at a distance of 2 meters or more from each other at all times.
- ▶ **Organize work teams** to limit exchanges and contacts as much as possible:
  - ▶ In order to limit contacts, workers should work in the same establishment whenever possible. **Assignment to more than one establishment** (even if under the same legal entity) **should be limited, while ensuring that activities that are essential to the institution's mission are carried out.**

---

<sup>4</sup> Online learning activities contribute to the minimization of contact, which is a key strategy to control the spread of the disease. In an educational context, other issues must also be considered before opting for this measure. This is why it is recommended that this teaching option be considered when the situation requires it (e.g., closing a class or school) or allows it (e.g., age and autonomy of learners, content of the subject matter to be taught, etc.).



- ▶ Due to the multiplication of contacts, workers assigned to more than one establishment must be especially vigilant in maintaining physical distance from pupils, students, trainees and from co-workers, as well as in wearing protective equipment as soon as the 2-meter distance cannot be maintained.
- ▶ Interns and their supervisors who must travel to other establishments are required to comply with the prevention and protection measures for workers in those workplaces.
- ▶ Avoid any physical contact between adults and, when possible, with children whose age allows it (e.g., shaking hands, holding hands, hugging, kissing). When contact with a child is necessary, wear the appropriate protective equipment (see section on working within 2 metres, p. 5) and try to stay within 2 metres for as short a time as possible.
- ▶ Physical distancing should be favoured at all times when possible. Reorganize physical spaces and work activities in such a way as to respect the minimum physical distance of two metres between workers and all individuals (e.g.: colleagues, pupils, students, trainees):
  - ▶ Limit the number of people present in the same physical location at the same time;
  - ▶ Plan spacing between people within that physical space.

NOTE: Passing by someone without contact (in a corridor or on a staircase, for example) represents a low risk.

## Pay particular attention to the following situations

### Access to the premises

- ▶ Limit access to people driving students, using a method that is adapted to the institution and that limits to a minimum possible contact with several people, for example when students arrive and leave the school, or during breaks (recesses):
  - ▶ Adjust schedules to allow for phased arrivals/departures;
  - ▶ If possible, stagger breaks and recesses.

### For elementary school daycare services

- ▶ When necessary, pick up the child at the front door of the building. If possible, arrival and departure management methods that help limiting bottlenecks should be used (e.g., mobile application).
- ▶ Limit visitors' access to certain areas of the child care center (for example, parents should not enter their child's group room).
- ▶ Ask adults entering the child care centre to always maintain a physical distance of 2m from other people (adults and children).

### Bottlenecks

Workers, pupils, students and interns should pay particular attention to areas acting as bottlenecks (e.g., building entrance, entrance to the classrooms or locker rooms, staircases, entrance to the cafeteria, courtyard exit, etc.):

- ▶ Avoid lineups of people standing close together in these areas.



- ▶ If necessary, slightly stagger work, break and meal schedules.
- ▶ Install easily accessible hydroalcoholic solution dispensers in open areas to avoid installing them where they will create other bottlenecks.
- ▶ [Posters](#) [in French only] reminding people of the importance of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing should be posted in these areas.
- ▶ Avoid placing dispensers at these locations to avoid worsening the bottleneck effect. Instead, choose to install them in large, open spaces.

## Breaks and meals

### FOR WORKERS ONLY:

**There has been a tendency for some workers to drop protective measures when they are with co-workers, which increases the risk of transmission of COVID-19.**

- ▶ Ensure that physical distancing measures are applied between colleagues during breaks and meals (e.g., avoid gatherings).
- ▶ Remove non-essential objects (magazines, newspapers, knick-knacks) from common areas.
- ▶ Do not share utensils, dishes, or glasses.
- ▶ Ensure workers have access to rooms large enough to allow a minimum two-metre distance between each of them. Arrange for additional rooms if necessary, or ask personnel who can eat at their desks to do so.

### FOR THE CHILDREN'S MEAL TIMES:

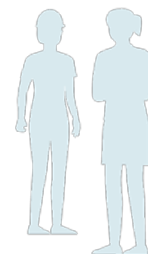
- ▶ Whenever possible for autonomous children, favour a distance of two metres between the children and the workers.
- ▶ Do not share utensils, dishes, or glasses.

## Working less than two metres apart

For tasks **where it is impossible to maintain a minimum two-metre distance** from anyone **for more than 15 cumulative minutes in a single work shift**, **adjustments** must be made:

### Physical barriers

- ▶ According to the [COVID-19 hierarchy of control measures for workers](#), the first measure to be implemented when physical distance cannot be maintained is a physical barrier (e.g., Plexiglas). This is preferable to wearing personal protective equipment, which must be handled frequently and causes some discomfort (e.g., heat).
- ▶ Physical barriers must meet certain height and width criteria.
- ▶ Here are some examples:
  - ▶ Physical barrier for a teacher's desk to allow students to receive explanations on a specific task, or for the teacher to make individual interventions;
  - ▶ Physical barrier installed at the reception desk of the secretary's office, at the library or at the office of professionals who receive pupils, students or workers in consultation;



- ▶ Physical barriers in open office spaces.

## Personal protective equipment between co-workers

- ▶ Wearing a **quality medical procedure mask**<sup>5</sup> is recommended when interacting within 2 meters of colleagues for more than 15 cumulative minutes in a day (respecting physical distance between colleagues should always be preferred). Note that if all colleagues do not wear the procedure mask, eye protection is required in addition to the procedure mask.

## Personal protective equipment to be used with pupils, students, trainees or any individual external to the establishment (e.g.: parents, customers, suppliers, subcontractors):

- ▶ Wearing a **quality medical procedure mask**<sup>5</sup> is recommended when interacting within 2 meters of colleagues for more than 15 cumulative minutes in a day (respecting physical distance between colleagues should always be preferred).

### \*Please note:

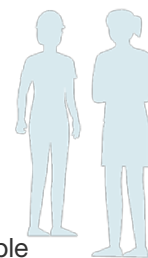
- ▶ Protective eyewear can be used as eye protection, but prescription eyewear is not eye protection.
- ▶ A face covering is worn according to current government standards – however, it is NOT an acceptable substitute for a quality medical procedure mask<sup>5</sup> as personal protection for workers. For more information, see the following [CNESST poster](#) [in French only].
- ▶ Interns and their supervisors who must travel to other establishments are required to comply with the prevention and protection measures for workers in those workplaces.

## To remove personal protective equipment

- ▶ Quality medical procedure masks are effective as long as they are dry. They should be changed as soon as they are wet or soiled. If the same mask is reused by the same worker:
  - ▶ Discard if visibly soiled, damaged or difficult to breathe with.
  - ▶ Fold the mask so that the outside is folded on itself and place it in a paper bag or non-sealed container.
- ▶ Generally, it is recommended to change the procedure mask after 4 hours of use.
- ▶ Remove eye protection and medical procedure mask safely (by washing hands before and after putting it on and removing it) and dispose of non-reusable equipment in the trash or in designated reclosable containers or bags.
- ▶ Disinfect reusable equipment (eye protection, if reusable) with a product suitable for the equipment

---

<sup>5</sup> Ideally, masks with compliance testing (ASTM) should be preferred. For details on quality standards and for criteria to help the employer choose the right masks in situations of real or apprehended shortages, refer to the following documents: [Mesures exceptionnelles pour les équipements de protection individuelle lors de pandémie](#) and [Masques chirurgicaux ou de procédures : choix de l'équipement sur le choix des masques de procédure](#) [in French only].



## Specific actions to be taken by workers taking care of a person with symptoms associated with COVID-19

- ▶ Have an emergency kit ready for use containing gloves, quality medical procedure masks<sup>6</sup>, re-sealable bags, overgarments, and a hydro-alcoholic solution.
- ▶ Isolate the person in a room designated for this purpose.
  - ▶ Ask the symptomatic person to wear a quality medical procedure mask<sup>6</sup> if they are not experiencing breathing difficulties;
  - ▶ The worker assisting the symptomatic person must wear gloves and overgarment in addition to the quality medical procedure mask and eye protection already worn;
  - ▶ If the symptomatic person is a child, ensure that only one worker looks after the child while the parent picks them up.
- ▶ Once the symptomatic person has left, clean and disinfect the objects and surfaces they were in contact with, and ventilate the room.
  - ▶ Safely<sup>7</sup> remove gloves, eye protection, quality medical procedure mask and overgarment in the room and dispose of them on site (in a contactless garbage can, if available) or in designated containers or bags;
  - ▶ Disinfect reusable equipment (e.g., eye protection, if reusable);
  - ▶ Make sure to wash your hands before leaving the room;
  - ▶ For cleaning and disinfection of the room and personal belongings of the symptomatic person, see page 9.
- ▶ For case and contact management, refer to public health guidelines. For schools, refer to the guidelines available at the [following link](#) [in French only].

## Food handlers

- ▶ Although COVID-19 does not appear to be transmitted through the ingestion of food, as a precautionary measure, frequent hand washing and adherence to good food hygiene and safety practices are required.
- ▶ Access to the kitchen should be restricted to kitchen workers only.

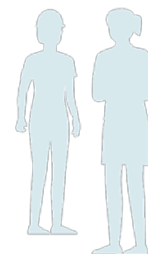
### When handling food, wash your hands:

- ▶ Before and after handling food.
- ▶ After going to the washroom and after coughing or sneezing.
- ▶ After having touched a soiled surface.

---

<sup>6</sup> Ideally, masks with compliance testing (ASTM) should be preferred. For details on quality standards and for criteria to help the employer choose the right masks in situations of real or apprehended shortages, refer to the following documents: [Mesures exceptionnelles pour les équipements de protection individuelle lors de pandémie](#) and [Masques chirurgicaux ou de procédures : choix de l'équipement sur le choix des masques de procédure](#) [in French only].

<sup>7</sup> Remove the gloves, wash your hands with a hydroalcoholic solution, remove the overgarment, wash your hands with a hydroalcoholic solution, remove the eye protection, wash your hands with a hydroalcoholic solution, remove the mask by handling it by its elastic straps and without touching the face-covering paper part. Finish by washing your hands with soap and water, or with a hydroalcoholic solution. See the following [video](#) [in French only].



## Elevators

- ▶ If elevators are present in the establishment, see [the recommendations on the use of elevators in workplaces](#) [in French only].
- ▶ If possible, respect the minimum two-meter distance between users within the elevator. Otherwise:
  - ▶ Reduce the number of users to the smallest number necessary to prevent any physical contact between them. The further people are from each other, the lower the risk of virus transmission.
  - ▶ Display the maximum number of people at the entrance to each elevator.
  - ▶ Advise users to avoid all physical contact.
  - ▶ If workers use procedural masks in the course of their work, they must wear them in the elevator when the two-metre distance cannot be respected.
  - ▶ Ensure that the elevator's ventilation system is well maintained and operates according to current standards.

## Receiving goods

- ▶ Opt to have the same teams come into contact with persons from outside of the company (e.g., delivery persons, drivers, etc.);
- ▶ Ideally, organize tasks so that delivery persons and suppliers can drop off goods at the company entrance to avoid having workers from other companies circulate inside the building;
- ▶ Place goods on a clean surface while maintaining the minimum two-metre distance between individuals; isolate the goods receiving area from other sections of the facility.

## Handling of objects and signing of documents

- ▶ Although COVID-19 appears to be transmitted very little through objects, to the extent possible, keep paper exchanges to a minimum (e.g., electronic signature of contracts or delivery slips).
- ▶ Where hardcopy documents are required:
  - ▶ Ensure good hand hygiene before and after handling objects and signing documents.

## Portable air conditioning and ventilation

When conditions require it, stand-alone air conditioners and fans can be used with care while respecting certain measures outlined in the following [information sheet](#) [in French only].

## Cleaning and disinfection of areas and surfaces

### Cleaning only

- ▶ Infrequently touched surfaces and objects:
  - ▶ Clean with commonly used products, in accordance with usual maintenance procedures.
- ▶ Refer to the information provided by the [INSPQ](#) for further details.



## Cleaning and disinfection

- ▶ Cleaning followed by disinfection is recommended for frequently touched objects and surfaces by several people (e.g., tables, door handles, switches, counters, handles, desks, telephones, computer accessories, computer keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks, photocopiers, payment terminals, etc.), at least once a day and, when appropriate, between each user (e.g., telephone). Cleaning and disinfecting instructions should be reviewed periodically as knowledge on the transmission of COVID-19 grows.
- ▶ For outdoor play modules, clean when visibly soiled.
- ▶ Immediately clean and disinfect visible stains (e.g., nasal secretions, saliva), soiled surfaces or dirty objects.
- ▶ Allow sufficient contact time with the disinfectant to inactivate the virus (according to the manufacturer's specifications).
- ▶ Refer to the information provided by [Health Canada](#) and by the [INSPQ](#).

## Dining rooms

- ▶ Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the dining room after each meal period (tables, chairs, handles, faucets and taps, countertops, microwaves, coffee maker, etc.).

## Washrooms and changing rooms

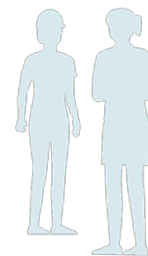
- ▶ Clean and disinfect at a minimum on every work shift, or more depending on usage.

## Wearing gloves for cleaning

- ▶ Wearing waterproof gloves is recommended to protect hands from being irritated by the products used.
- ▶ Avoid touching the face while wearing gloves.
- ▶ When removing gloves, discard them or, if reusable, clean them and allow them to dry properly. Wash your hands immediately afterwards.

## Cleaning and disinfection of work areas and rooms used for temporary isolation that have been occupied by infected (confirmed cases) or symptomatic workers

- ▶ Close off the work area and the room.
- ▶ Clean and disinfect the work area and the room used by the person.
- ▶ If possible, open the outside windows to increase air circulation in the area in question.
- ▶ Allow sufficient contact time with the disinfectant to inactivate the virus (according to the manufacturer's specifications).
- ▶ Once disinfection is completed, the work area and the room can be reopened.



## Washing clothes

- ▶ Wash clothing worn at work at the end of each workday in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, using the hottest water setting suitable for these articles of clothing and the usual detergent.
- ▶ Avoid shaking dirty clothing.
- ▶ This clothing does not have to be washed separately from other clothes.

## Dishwashing

- ▶ Whenever possible, each user should wash their own dishes (while respecting the minimum two-metre distance).
- ▶ Dishes and utensils must be washed with hot water and the usual dish soap.
- ▶ A dishwasher can also be used.
- ▶ Whenever possible, avoid using spray heads (chef-style faucets) to dislodge food to avoid splashing the face; instead, use pre-soaking or dislodge food residue with a cloth or sponge.
- ▶ Wash your hands after handling dirty dishes.

## Agency workers

- ▶ An employer using the services of a personnel placement agency must apply the same protective and preventive measures to these workers as to all workers in their organization.
- ▶ The employer must also ensure that the agency complies with public health measures. For more details on the recommendations made to personnel placement agencies, refer to the [INSPQ information sheet](#) [in French only].

## First-aid workers in the workplace

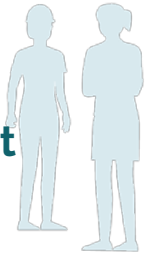
- ▶ For more details on the recommendations made to first-aid workers in the workplace, refer to the following information sheet: [COVID-19: First-Aid in the Workplace - Preventive Measures in the Workplace](#).

## Information – promotion – training

Place posters reminding people of the importance of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing in strategic areas.

Have a plan for informing and training workers and managers with regard to protective and preventive measures.

Follow the available online training courses on preventive and protective measures to be taken in relation to COVID-19: [COVID-19 et santé au travail](#) [in French only].



## Psychological health and prevention of psychosocial risks at work

- ▶ In addition to controlling the risks of transmission of COVID-19, it is recommended that attention also be paid to ensuring a psychosocial work environment conducive to psychological health and to taking the necessary actions to prevent worker psychological distress directly or indirectly related to the pandemic.
- ▶ Refer to the [INSPQ information sheet](#) and the [IRSST guidelines](#) [both in French only].

## Pandemic contingency plan

- ▶ Have a pandemic contingency plan adapted to the specific context of your workplace and see to its implementation: <https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/en/document-000969/>.

### Other useful references:

IRSST: [Lignes directrices pour la reprise des activités pédagogiques dans les milieux universitaires québécois](#) [in French only].

INSPQ: [COVID-19: Hierarchy of Control Measures in the Workplace - Preventive Measures in the Workplace](#)

CNESST: [Précisions sur les mesures de contrôle – COVID-19](#) [in French only].

Gouvernement du Québec: [Décret sur le port du couvre-visage dans les lieux publics intérieurs](#) [in French only].

NOTE: The preceding recommendations are based on the latest information available at the time of writing. Given that the situation and knowledge about the SARS-CoV-2 virus (COVID-19) are evolving rapidly, the recommendations in this document are subject to change.

## Schools and teaching environments

---

### AUTHOR

SAT-COVID-19 Working Group  
Direction des risques biologiques et de la santé au travail de l'[INSPQ](#)  
[Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail](#)

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the [IRSSST](#) and the [CNESST](#) for their comments provided during the revision of the [French version](#) of this information sheet.

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Valérie Beaulieu

### FORMATTING

Marie-Cécile Gladel  
Direction des risques biologiques et de la santé au travail

### TRANSLATION

Nina Alexakis Gilbert  
Nektaria Nicolakakis, specialist scientific advisor  
Karl Forest-Bérard, scientific advisor  
Direction des risques biologiques et de la santé au travail



© Gouvernement du Québec (2020)

Publication No.: 3056 - English version