



## Durham Region Health Department **Facts about...**



# **Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**

## **Living in Communal Settings**

This information is intended to help residents living in and facility staff of communal settings reduce the risk of exposure to illnesses including COVID-19. Communal settings may include but are not limited to senior residences, apartment complexes or condominium complexes with shared spaces.

### **Precautions in response to COVID-19:**

- ✓ If you think you have COVID-19 symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, difficulty breathing) or have been in close contact with someone who has it, use Ontario's COVID-19 online self-assessment tool at [covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/](https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/) to help determine how to seek further care.
- ✓ If residents have respiratory symptoms, have tested positive for COVID-19 or have returned from travel, they must self-isolate for 14 days and not leave their unit. This includes not going for walks or going shopping.
- ✓ Residents who are higher risk (e.g. over the age of 70 or have a compromised immune system) should also self-isolate. Try to find help from friends, family, neighbours or other services for essential needs.
- ✓ Residents should avoid any non-essential trips into the community.
- ✓ Practice good [physical \(social\) distancing](#) whenever possible (keep 2 m distance from others).
- ✓ Any gatherings of more than 5 people are not allowed, unless you live together. This includes in common areas and in personal units.
- ✓ Social visiting should be avoided

### **General steps to reduce the transmission of illness:**

- ✓ The Health Department recommends getting the COVID-19 vaccine.
- ✓ Practise proper respiratory etiquette (e.g. cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue and not your hands followed by appropriate hand hygiene).
- ✓ Practise proper hand hygiene by following proper [handwashing](#) and [hand sanitizing](#) methods.
- ✓ Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) should have an alcohol concentration between 70%- 90%.
- ✓ It is recommended that you use a face covering (non-medical mask) when physical distancing may not be possible. Face coverings should not be used by children under the age of two, or by individuals who are unable to wear it due to a medical condition, or unable to wear/remove it properly.



- ✓ Any communally used items (e.g. magazines, books, etc.) should be removed.
- ✓ Common areas, such as washrooms, laundry rooms, and other high traffic areas should have ABHR available that is checked often to ensure a continuous supply.
- ✓ Ensure shared sinks have liquid hand soap and paper towels dispensers regularly checked to ensure they are continuously available. Single-use, disposable products are preferred. If using refillable dispensers, ensure they are cleaned first followed by disinfection between refills.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect all common areas including “high touch” surfaces (e.g. entry phones, elevator buttons and panels, door knobs, light switches, handrails, faucets, keypads, counters, laundry machines etc.).
- ✓ Cleaning and disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces should occur at least twice per day and when visibly dirty. Specific direction is found in [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)
- ✓ Cleaners and disinfectants must be approved by Health Canada for use against Coronavirus and the manufacturer’s directions are to be followed.

## Precautions – Elevators

- ✓ Assess elevators for size and the number of people that can safely fit inside allowing for 2m (6ft) of social distancing.
- ✓ A sign indicating the number of occupants permitted in the elevator at one time should be posted on the outside and inside the elevator.

## Precautions – Laundry Facilities

- ✓ Limit the number of people in the laundry room at one time to ensure adequate social distancing (i.e. 2m apart).
- ✓ Wash hands before and after handling dirty laundry and using the laundry facilities.
- ✓ Wipe down the machine controls with a disinfectant before and after using the machine.
- ✓ Avoid shaking out dirty laundry.
- ✓ Dry clothes thoroughly and completely using the high temperature setting.
- ✓ Disinfect the laundry hamper before re-using for clean items.
- ✓ Fold clothing items in your own unit and not in the common laundry facility.
- ✓ Avoid leaving dirty laundry or laundry baskets on top of machines.

## Additional Resources:

- ✓ Durham Region Health Department is routinely updating [durham.ca/covid19](https://durham.ca/covid19). Please check for up-to-date resources and information
- ✓ [Facts About Novel Coronavirus COVID-19](#)
- ✓ [Facts About Novel Coronavirus Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Home](#)
- ✓ [Facts About Novel Coronavirus and Physical Distancing](#)
- ✓ [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

## Reference:

Eykelbosh, A. COVID-19 Precautions for Multi-Unit Residential Buildings. Vancouver, BC: National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. 2020 March.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | [durham.ca/health](https://durham.ca/health)

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.

