



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



Guidance for community partners that are offering places to stay cool during COVID-19

Overview

Extreme heat is a major public health concern. Exposure to extreme heat can cause a variety of health problems, including heat stroke and death. Cooling centres (a cool site or air-conditioned facility designed to provide relief and protection during extreme heat) are used by many communities to protect the health of our most vulnerable residents during heat events.

These recommendations are intended to help cooling centres/spaces reduce the risk of exposure to illnesses with general infection prevention and control recommendations for staff and visitors of these settings.

Facility Operation Considerations

Staff and Volunteers

Plan for staff and volunteer absences. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training cooling centre staff. Encourage ill staff and volunteers to stay home (or be sent home if they develop symptoms while at the facility) to prevent transmitting the infection to others.

Visitor Traffic Flow

Traffic flow through the cooling centre should be designed to have visitors move in one direction and not have people passing each other in narrow areas such as hallways and entrances. Have visitors enter through a single entrance and then exit the facility through a different door. Post directional signage to assist visitors in understanding which direction they should be moving through the facility.

Screening

Consider setting up a 'Sign in Table' to collect contact information for all visitors at the cooling centres in case of a need for contact tracing.

If resources are available, consider implementing active verbal screening before admitting visitors to the cooling centre. Screening will reduce the spread of COVID-19 transmission in the community. If a staff or visitor is symptomatic (e.g. cough, fever, difficulty breathing), provide the person with a non-surgical mask and move them to a separate area away from others. If possible, have the symptomatic person contact the Durham Health Connection Line at 905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 immediately for further direction.

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905-668-2020 or 1-800-841-2729 | durham.ca/health

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



It is recommended that everyone at the cooling centre wear a non-medical face mask where physical distancing can't be maintained or is a challenge, unless they are from the same household.

Physical Distancing

Maintain social (physical) distancing within cooling centres, ideally at least 2 metres between individuals. Consider separation of furniture and creating spaces for individual family units (families who live together do not need to maintain physical distancing in a cooling centre).

In larger cooling centre facilities, it may be possible to provide adequate space for social distancing among visitors. If a lack of potential cooling centre sites arises, emergency alternatives such as using parked air-conditioned buses can be utilized. Communities may also partner with closed businesses, such as movie theaters, as alternative cooling sites.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Clean and disinfect environmental and commonly touched surfaces routinely throughout the day. Commonly used disinfectants are effective against COVID-19. If an area is heavily soiled, it should be cleaned with soap and water before a disinfectant is used.

Wipe down tables and chairs with a disinfectant wipe between patrons. Provide a safe place for visitors to dispose of garbage.

Please refer to Public Health Ontario's [cleaning and disinfection guidelines for public settings](#) for further guidance.

COVID-19 Prevention Supplies

If available, provide COVID-19 prevention supplies onsite at cooling centres. Have supplies on hand for staff, volunteers, and visitors, such as soap, tissues, and trash baskets. Alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) onsite should have an alcohol concentration of at least 60%.

Check liquid hand soap, paper towels and ABHR dispensers regularly to ensure continuous provision. Single-use, disposable products are preferred. If using refillable dispensers, ensure they are cleaned first followed by disinfection between refills.

Ensure staff and volunteers are equipped with and trained to use appropriate PPE. It is recommended that a supply of masks are available on-site for any visitors that may present with COVID like symptoms.

If water bottles are distributed at the cooling centre, ensure visitors do not share bottles or glasses.

Communication

Post [Stop the Spread](#) of germs and [Cover your Cough](#) posters in visible locations onsite.

Post [screening sign](#) at all entrances and in strategic places providing instruction on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette, and mask use.

Additional Resources

Durham Region Health Department is routinely updating durham.ca/NovelCoronavirus

[Global Heat Health Information Network Cooling Centres](#)

US CDC [COVID and Cooling Centres](#)

May 28, 2020

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