

# NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Nova Scotia's health care system is actively monitoring and testing for potential cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

This work includes:

- establishing a patient screening process for use by front-line health care workers
- monitoring and investigating potential cases
- applying effective public health and infection control measures
- establishing working groups focused on disease surveillance, health system impact monitoring, models of care, supplies and resource management
- working with Nova Scotia's Emergency Management Office and other non-health partners on business continuity planning
- sharing accurate, up-to-date information with our partners and Nova Scotians

## GOOD HYGIENE IS THE BEST DEFENCE

There are currently no vaccines available to protect your staff against the human coronavirus infection. Employers are encouraged to think about the actions they can take to help staff stay healthy and help their operations prevent spread of any respiratory illness, including COVID-19.

### Support good hand hygiene – Remind staff to wash or sanitize hands frequently, particularly:

- Before and after preparing or eating food
- After handling waste, dirty linens/clothes or bathroom use
- After working with animals
- Whenever hands look dirty
- After shaking hands

Washing with soap and water is preferred – rubbing hands together removes visible dirt and germs. Use disposable paper towels (preferred) for drying hands or a reusable towel that you replace after use.

If soap and water are not available (and hands are not visibly dirty), use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Use enough to cover the fronts and backs of both hands, between all fingers and rub hands together until they feel dry.

## Use cough/sneeze etiquette

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Dispose used tissues in the garbage and wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub immediately after OR
- Cough/sneeze into your elbow, not your hand

*Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands*

## Clean high-touch surfaces and objects often (at a minimum of twice daily or as needed)

Viruses can live on surfaces for several days. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects can reduce germs and prevent infection.

- Clean and disinfect items like doorknobs, light switches, railings, elevator buttons, toilets, desks and tabletops daily – wash using soapy water, then disinfect using household cleaning products (follow the directions on the label) or a solution of 1-part bleach to 9-parts water
- Disinfect phones, remote controls, computers and other handheld devices with 70% alcohol or wipes
- Wash or launder linens, clothing and uniforms on a regular basis.
- Dispose of garbage on a regular basis. Wash hands after.
- Remove non-essential items like magazines, stuffed toys and other items that cannot be cleaned from reception areas.

## MAKE A PLAN - BEING PREPARED IS GOOD BUSINESS

- Make sure you have a business continuity or emergency plan in place.
- Think about what you will do if a number of your employees become sick
- Support employees who may become ill. Talk to your staff about flexible hours or alternative work options should they need to stay at home for an extended period
- Support proper infection prevention and control measures in your business. Post handwashing signs, provide alcohol-based hand rub to encourage frequent hand hygiene and ensure space/surface cleaning is completed.
- Avoid requesting doctors' notes from employees who become sick or self-isolate

## GET ACCURATE INFORMATION

The situation with COVID-19 is rapidly evolving. Find accurate, up-to-date information, including when to seek help at:

- **Province of Nova Scotia:**  
[novascotia.ca/coronavirus](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus)

Other Resources:

- **Government of Canada:**  
[canada.ca/coronavirus](https://canada.ca/coronavirus)
- The Public Health Agency of Canada has established a new **Coronavirus Information Line: 1-833-784-4397**