

Update on the **Novel Coronavirus in Peel**

This guidance is for businesses that are permitted to operate under various federal, provincial and municipal orders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Peel Public Health strongly recommends that where possible, businesses allowed to remain open consider closing and/or making operational changes (e.g., allowing employees to work from home and/or changing processes to delivery or pick-up) in order to protect staff and customers from COVID-19.

If your business will remain open during the outbreak, it is important that preventative measures (e.g., ensuring staff practice physical distancing, ensuring employees stay home if sick, and increasing cleaning and sanitizing of high contact surfaces) be taken to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Simple steps can make a big difference in protecting your community. For more information on preventative measures visit: www.peelregion.ca/coronavirus/prevention/.

What if my employee tests positive?

Sometimes, despite a person's best efforts to protect themselves from an exposure, an employee may fall ill to COVID-19. Peel Public Health understands that a positive diagnosis can be stressful for the employee and that it can be concerning to the employer.

This resource explains the steps that Public Health takes when a person tests positive and the role that Public Health will play in assessing risk of exposure at a workplace.

What happens when a person is diagnosed with COVID-19?

1. The testing lab notifies the responsible public health unit of each positive case of COVID-19.
2. Public Health staff then follow-up with the individual case to:
 - let the person know that they tested positive and to answer any questions they may have
 - advise them of the need to [self-isolate](#) for a specified duration of time
 - try to determine how they may have been exposed to COVID-19
 - determine the places they went while infectious (e.g., to work or public places) and who their close contacts were. If close contacts are identified, Public Health will contact them and anyone else who we may need to speak with to assess risk to others (e.g., their employer).

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3. Public Health staff will then follow-up with close contacts to let them know of the situation, to confirm if they were a close contact, and if so, to advise them to immediately self-isolate for 14 days following the last date of exposure to the case.

They will also give them information on how to self-monitor for symptoms, and what to do if they develop symptoms over the 14 days. Due to the way in which COVID-19 spreads to others (through respiratory droplets), only close contacts of the person are at an additional risk. Public Health will therefore only call close contacts.

What happens if the individual was at work while infectious?

There is now community spread of COVID-19 in Peel, as such all interactions should be treated as a potential risk of exposure. If a person was at work while infectious, Public Health staff will determine if they posed any additional risk to the workplace than what exists in the general community.

Please Note: not all cases result in exposures. A transient interaction (e.g., walking past someone who tested positive) does not pose an increased risk. There is also no increased risk of exposure if the person was not at work while infectious.

Public Health will consult with the employer if additional information is needed related to the individual (e.g., to confirm their close contacts or to clarify details that the employee cannot provide) or if any other measures need to be taken by the workplace or staff to reduce the risk of transmission.

It is important to note that Public Health:

- is required by law to respect the privacy of the person infected.
- will only disclose a positive case to an employer if it is needed to manage the exposure risk to others.

Sample Memo to Staff or Visitors to the Workplace

As mentioned above, Public Health will only disclose a positive case to an employer if it is **needed** to manage the exposure risk to others. An employer may then decide to notify other staff or visitors to the workplace of the positive case. In doing so the employer is encouraged to keep in mind that it can be very stressful for a person to be diagnosed with COVID-19. Employers are encouraged to treat the individual in a respectful manner that protects the privacy of their worker. A sample memo can be found in Appendix 1.

To do your best as an employer to protect your employee's privacy, we suggest using the least amount of information possible.

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Appendix 1: Sample memo notifying employees and/or the public of a positive case in the workplace:

An Important Update

The COVID-19 situation is evolving. Today we were notified that one of our staff has been confirmed with having the COVID-19 virus. The employee last worked on <<INSERT DATE>>.

At this time, the employee is resting at home in self isolation <<INSERT DESCRIPTION OF HOW THEY ARE DOING>>.

We're taking all necessary precautions. We have closed our store <<INSERT DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS TYPE>> to undertake a 1-day deep clean as recommended by the Public Health Agency of Canada.

We will continue to be honest with you, our employees, customers and community. Every effort will be taken.

We are working closely with Peel Public Health to assist them with their investigation. They have stated <<INSERT PEEL PUBLIC HEALTH RISK LANGUAGE HERE – TO BE PROVIDED BY PUBLIC HEALTH >>.

We do know that COVID-19 is now in our community though, so again we encourage everyone to take precautions and wash your hands and practice physical distancing when you do have to go out.

We're here for you during these difficult times.

STORE <<INSERT DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS TYPE>> HOURS HAVE BEEN IMPACTED<<list them>>

Thank you,

OWNER