

## Workplace Considerations for a Healthy & Safe Landscape Season

Nothing makes the need for effective infection control protocols clearer than a global pandemic. Without a solid understanding of the dos, don'ts, myths and best practices, the hazards presented by infectious agents can easily confuse, confound and otherwise present numerous risks to workplaces.

This document seeks to present some clarity on workplace best practices regarding the proper use of masks, cleaning and disinfecting procedures, prevention protocols and clarity on return to work for staff who have tested positive for Covid-19, to help mitigate ensuing risks.

### Tips and Resources for These Commonly Asked Questions

#### Question 1: I know I have to try to keep people with Covid-19 out of my workplace. If someone has symptoms, how can I tell whether it's Covid-19, a cold, a flu, or something else?

This is a great question, with an answer that will continue to evolve as we learn more about infectious agents each day. Because many of the symptoms associated with these types of illnesses are shared, non-specific and someone can have more than one infection at a time, we must all continue to use the appropriate screening tools and follow the instructions from those results.

It is important to recognize that from a prevention perspective, many of the methods to prevent infection in the workplace are the same – if doing these things well prevents numerous ill outcomes, it underscores the importance of doing them consistently & correctly. Check out some of the prevention suggestions below.

Determining if symptoms are due to Covid-19 is a clinical/medical decision, usually involving a Covid-19 test to confirm the diagnosis. This can ONLY be done by following medical health professional guidance.

Timely response to symptom identification through screening and prompt follow-up action is essential. Resources must be fulsome & kept up to date. Consider reviewing the WSPS Pandemic [Playbook](#) as well as the other listed resources. Ensure [prevention](#) protocols (screening workers, hand washing, surface decontamination, sneeze/cough into your sleeve, face coverings etc.) pursuant to Public Health guidance are followed.

#### RESOURCES

[Similarities and Differences between Flu and Covid-19](#)

[What's the Difference Between a Cold and the Flu](#)

[Do I have the flu or another respiratory illness](#)  
[Flu Facts](#)

[Screening tool guidance](#)

[Symptoms of Covid-19](#)

[Covid-19 test](#)

[Find a Covid-19 testing location](#)

[Assess Your Risk Of Getting Covid-19](#)

#### Question 2: How should I be disinfecting surfaces and are there certain products I need to use?

This is a great question, and the answer is, it depends! How you clean or disinfect the workplace depends on a variety of factors including the items and surfaces to be cleaned and the products being used. Always following manufacturing guidelines and instructions on labels. Cleaning and disinfection practices may also vary in decontaminating areas where individuals are suspected/confirmed to have been infected with Covid-19. Ensure necessary policies are in place and that training happens before cleaning and disinfection tasks are completed.

The listed resources will provide you with additional information and guidance for disinfecting the workplace, high touch surfaces and low touch surfaces. Create a schedule and checklist for cleaning and disinfecting before, after, and during the workday. Include shared areas such as offices, kitchens and washrooms, break rooms, congregate housing, and vehicles.

#### RESOURCES

[Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during Covid-19 - Canada.ca](#)  
[Pathogen Decontamination Checklist](#)

[Infection Prevention and Control ECourse](#)

[Prevent the Spread Tip Sheets and Posters](#)

[Health Canada Approved Disinfectants](#)  
[Hand sanitizer FAQ](#)

### Question 3: I have heard so much about masking, what is the most current guidance?

Employers should determine whether personal protective equipment (PPE)\* needs to be part of their hazard control plan. The need for PPE should be based on a risk assessment that may take into consideration input from the local public health unit and factors in the workplace that may increase the risk of COVID-19 such as close proximity and closed and crowded spaces. Although proper use of PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other control measures.

**\*NOTE:** Please be reminded that masks are not an appropriate substitute for physical distancing and other control measures in the workplace. To learn more about PPE as well as face coverings, please refer to these sections in the Guide to Developing your Workplace Covid-19 Safety Plan at [www.ontario.ca](http://www.ontario.ca) or see the WSPS Pandemic Playbook. We have also listed some links to provide additional guidance. Prolonged use of masks can be uncomfortable and it is important to ensure the wearer is using the mask correctly. For additional information regarding masking and heat stress please refer to the provided resource.

#### RESOURCES

[Mask Safety Basics Video](#)  
[Hierarchy of Controls](#)

[Masks Face Coverings and Filtered Masks](#)

(SOURCE: WHO)

[Heat Stress and Masking](#)

### Question 4: What do I do if someone tests positive in the workplace?

A person who has Covid-19 must self-isolate to avoid infecting others. Standard Covid-19 tests (not rapid tests used for screening) determine if a person with symptoms has Covid-19. The test can also determine if someone who was exposed is infected, even if they have no symptoms.

1. **Symptomatic workers or workers who are at high risk for close contact, must self-isolate for 14 days, even if they test negative.**
2. **A worker must self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days if they:**
  - test positive on a standard Covid-19 test
  - are told by their health care provider or a public health official that they have Covid-19
3. **The self-isolation period is at least 20 days if the worker either:**
  - had severe Covid-19 illness (were admitted to intensive care)
  - has severe immune compromise The self-isolation period starts from when the worker's symptoms started or the day they were tested, whichever is earlier.

**Workers can return to work after their self-isolation period if they have no fever and their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours. Workers do not need a negative Covid-19 test to return to the workplace after self-isolating for the full period.**

Employers must report any occupationally acquired illnesses (including COVID-19 illness related to a workplace exposure) to the Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) within three (3) days of receiving notification of the illness. (Note for workplaces that include volunteers: This reporting requirement only applies to unpaid volunteers in certain circumstances, such as volunteer firefighters)

In addition, if an employer is advised that the worker or volunteer got sick due to an exposure at the workplace or that a claim has been filed with the WSIB, the employer must also notify the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development in writing **within four (4) days**. Note: ALL critical injuries (including volunteers or even customers) must be reported to MLTSD

The employer must also advise the: workplace joint health and safety committee, health and safety representative, and trade unions, if applicable.

If a worker or volunteer **does** test positive for Covid-19, disinfect surfaces they may have touched as soon as possible and follow public health instructions. Refer to [Public Health Ontario](#) for guidance on cleaning and disinfection of public settings, including schools, transit, colleges/universities and other workplaces in Ontario. For more detailed information, please [contact your local public health unit](#)

#### RESOURCES

[Self isolation and returning to work](#)

[Self-isolation: Guide for caregivers, household members and close contacts](#)

[Infectious Disease Emergency Leave](#)

[Safety Requirements for Volunteers ECourse](#)

[WSIB reporting link](#)

[MLTSDocIllness.notices@ontario.ca](mailto:MLTSDocIllness.notices@ontario.ca)  
[Definition of Worker](#)

[Occupational Illnesses](#)

[FAQs about Claims and Covid-19](#)

[Public Health Ontario's Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#)

### Question 5: What will MLTSD be looking for during an inspection, and how can I prepare in advance?

The health and safety of Ontario workers is the Ministry's number one priority. They are working closely with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and Public Health Ontario to provide support, advice and enforcement as needed to ensure the health and safety of Ontario workers during this uncertain time.

The MLTSD has collaborated with WSPS to develop sector-specific safety guidance, sample Covid-19 workplace safety plans and additional job aids and resources.

During an inspection of your workplace, an inspector or compliance officer could ask whether you have developed a safety plan, may ask to see it and expect to see it posted in an obvious place within the workplace. (Note: Employers are not required to send their plan to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development). Ministry inspectors will also be looking that reasonable precautions in the circumstances are being taken to protect workers.

It's important to remember that there are 3 broad groups addressing Covid-19 rules:

- Occupational Health and Safety Inspectors
- Compliance Assistance Teams (CAT Teams)
- Multi-Ministry Teams (MMTs)

There may also be different persons designated to enforce all or parts of it. These may include:

- Some or all Provincial Offences Officers
- Police Officers
- By-law Officers
- Public Health officers

#### RESOURCES

[Sector Specific Guidance](#)

[Sample Safety Plans](#)

<https://covid19.wsps.ca/resources>

[Covid-19 workplace safety plan](#)

NOTE: This document is intended for informational purposes only to provide an overview of the potential hazards posed in the workplace due to COVID-19. Content is current as of the publication date (May 3, 2021). It is not intended as scientific or medical advice, to provide a comprehensive risk assessment for all workplaces, or to replace any legislated workplace safety obligations. WSPS has not endorsed and does not endorse any particular product or company as a solution to the risk presented by COVID-19. Due to the ongoing evolution of the situation in Ontario and around the world, this document may be used as a guide for Employers in addition to guidance delivered by public health authorities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any use which is made of this document by any Employer or individual, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of the Employer or individual. WSPS and its partners, officers, directors, employees, agents, representatives, suppliers and service providers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions in content or for damages of any kind or nature suffered by any Employer or any third party as a result of use of or reliance on this communication.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

### Workplace Safety & Prevention Services

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Tel: 905 614 1400

Fax: 905 614 1414

[www.wsps.ca](http://www.wsps.ca)

### Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association

7856 Fifth Line South, RR4,  
Milton, Ontario  
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Toll Free: 1 800 265 5656

Phone: 1 416 848 7575

Fax: 1 905 875 3942

[www.horttrades.com](http://www.horttrades.com)