



# Living in Shared Accommodations & COVID-19

*This is a guide for people living in shared accommodation, including shelters, rooming houses, and other shared accommodation models. We recognize that your individual situation may be different, and these tips should be considered in your own context. Do the best you can.*

You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it. The most common symptoms are a cough, fever, and shortness of breath. The virus can spread to people who are within 2 metres or 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 when that person coughs or sneezes, or through direct contact with that person's saliva or mucous.

## How can I prevent COVID-19?

### Keeping yourself healthy



- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds (sing Happy Birthday twice or the full alphabet song) or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you don't have soap and water ready to use.
- Don't touch your face, nose, or mouth unless you have just cleaned your hands with soap and water
- Cover your cough and sneeze with a tissue or into your arm, not your hand.
- Avoid sharing personal items.
- Practice physical distancing as much as possible, even when you are feeling well:
  - Avoid having visitors and avoid visiting others
  - Avoid groups of people or crowds
  - Avoid non-essential trips into the community
  - Keep the windows down and sit in the back passenger seat if you must go into the community for an essential trip via taxi or rideshare
  - Limit or cancel any group gatherings
  - Spend time outside in settings where you can stay 2 meters (6 feet) from others
- Wearing a cloth mask helps to trap COVID-19 if you are sick and protects people who are around you. Since some people who are infected with COVID-19 may have the virus and not know it, whenever people are going out and might come into close contact with other people they should wear a mask. When other people wear a mask they are helping to protect you as well. It is reasonable to wear a homemade mask to protect others around you if you are unable to stay 2 meters (6 feet) away from others in public.
- If you are sick or need to be in close contact with someone who is sick and do not have access to a mask, cover your mouth and nose with a clean scarf or fabric. Staff in certain programs may ask you to wear a mask because they can't safely maintain a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet) between people in the space.

### Cleaning your space



- Clean and disinfect all high-touch areas twice daily and when visibly dirty.
- Take special care to clean any surfaces that may have blood, body fluids, and/or secretions on them.
- Use cleaners and disinfectants as per manufacturer's instructions
- Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
- Check expiry date of products prior to using.

## Shared areas



- When accessing shared areas, do your best to stay 2 meters (6 feet) away from others at all times. Spend only little time as possible in shared areas. Wash your hands before and after accessing shared areas (such as the kitchen, bathroom, laundry room, etc.).
- Avoid crowded elevators (wait for an empty one if you can)
- Avoid using any shared space (e.g. lobbies, hallways, mail rooms, laundry rooms) at the same time as other residents (or keep to a small number at a time to maintain distance)

## What to do if you are sick or have been instructed to self-isolate



- If you have symptoms such as a fever or cough, you must self-isolate for 14 days, or 24 hours after your symptoms have fully resolved, whichever is longer.
- If you do not have symptoms but have been told to self-isolate because of recent travel or recent exposure to someone who has COVID-19, you must self-isolate for 14 days from the day you returned from travel, or from your last known exposure to COVID-19.
- If you live in a shelter, let staff know about your situation as soon as possible. They will help you to figure out next steps.
- If no staff is available to you, contact Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 or your regular healthcare provider, if they are available, and let them know about your symptoms.
- Isolate yourself from others as best you can. Stay in your room as much as possible and arrange for someone to drop off food/groceries for you. If possible, use a separate bathroom from others that you live with. If you share a bathroom with others, make sure to clean it after each use.
- Stay home: do not use public transportation, taxis, or rideshares. Do not go to work, school, or other public places.
- Keep distance: if you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet) from others, and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth. If you cannot wear a mask, other people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you. If you cannot get a mask, cover your mouth and nose with a clean scarf or fabric.

## Tips to avoid spreading the virus to others



- Wash your hands often with soap and water, dry your hands with paper towel or a clean cloth that no one else shares. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve, not your hand.
- Throw used tissues in a wastebasket lined with a plastic bag and wash your hands. Wash your hands after emptying the wastebasket as well.
- Clean and disinfect all high-touch areas twice daily and when visibly dirty.
  - Take special care to clean any surfaces that may have blood, body fluids, and/or secretions on them.
  - Use cleaners and disinfectants as per manufacturer's instructions.
  - Use only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada.
  - Check expiry date of products prior to using.
  - Dishes and eating utensils should be cleaned with dish soap and water, or in a dishwasher with a drying cycle after each use.
  - If you are sick, do not share your eating utensils with others when possible.
- Laundry can be cleaned using regular laundry soap and water and do not require separation from other household laundry. Wear disposable gloves while handling soiled items, remove and dispose of gloves and wash hands immediately afterwards.



## Your mental health



- Physical distancing does not mean emotional distancing. If you can, check in with friends and loved ones by phone or other technology. Check in with yourself. It's ok to not be ok. It's normal for situations like COVID-19 to affect your mental health.
- Everyone will experience these events in their own way. Please know that help is available if you need it, and we encourage residents to reach out to the Mental Health Crisis Line (24 hours/day, 7 days/week) at 613-722-6914 (1-866-996-0991 if you are outside of Ottawa).
- If you or someone you know are experiencing thoughts of suicide or harming yourself, please call 9-1-1.

## Resources



- If you need to know about local emergency food options call 2-1-1. 2-1-1 can help you find organizations and services available in your area (such as food banks, food delivery services, etc.)
- Visit [OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus](https://ottawapublichealth.ca/coronavirus) for more information. If you do not have access to the internet, you can call Ottawa Public Health at 613-580-6744 or your regular healthcare provider.