



Places of Worship – COVID-19 Update

Date: August 28, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Advice on Places of Worship

On August 21, 2020 the Ministry of Health released Version 2 of its [COVID-19 Advice: Religious Services, Rites or Ceremonies](#). We provide responses to several frequently asked questions below. Places of Worship should continue to regularly monitor the Ministry of Health Guidance for Other Sectors website for updates in its guidance.

Q: Is singing allowed in Places of Worship?

A: As per Ministry guidance, it is recommended to adapt or suspend activities that increase the risk of disease transmission, which may include singing, choirs and playing wind or brass instruments.

- Consider using audio or video recordings of live singing or wind or brass instrumental music.
- Group singing is strongly discouraged. However, if more than one person is singing, limit the number of people singing to fewest possible.
- Anyone singing or playing wind or brass instruments should be 2 metres from anyone else and separated by an impermeable barrier. If a barrier is not used, anyone playing these instruments should be separated from any other person (outside of the same household or social circle) to the greatest extent possible, but at a minimum of 2 metres.

Q: How will the Region of Waterloo's Face Covering By-law impact Places of Worship?

A: Masks or face coverings must be worn at all times in enclosed Places of Worship, as per [Region of Waterloo's Face Covering By-law](#). Wearing a face covering is not a replacement for physical distancing and other Public Health measures. The worship leader is not required to wear a face covering while leading the service. However, the worship leader would need to wear a face covering if in the public area for congregation.

The by-law exempts:

- Children under the age of five.
- Those who are unable to wear a face covering as a result of a medical condition or a disability. Some disabilities are invisible so we ask people to respect that. The by-law does not require people to provide proof to support an exemption.
- A person engaged in a sport or other strenuous physical activity.

- A person who is assisting or accommodating someone who has a hearing loss or a hearing disability.
- A person who is consuming food/drink as part of a religious activity within a place of worship.

Q: What are the recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting?

A:

- Clean and disinfect all high-touch surfaces (e.g. toilets, sinks, door handles, light switches, remote controls) at least twice a day, after every religious service, or as often as necessary.
- Disinfectant kills germs on surfaces. Remove surface dirt first (clean) in order for the disinfectant to work.
- Choose a disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) approved by Health Canada, deemed effective against COVID-19 and viruses.
- Disinfectants, household cleaners, and bleach are meant to be used to clean surfaces, and according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Additional resources:

- [Cleaning and disinfection for public settings](#)
- [Surface disinfection with Chlorine \(Bleach\)](#)
- [List of hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers for COVID-19](#)

Q: How many people are allowed to attend a service?

A: According to *O. Reg. 364/20: RULES FOR AREAS IN STAGE 3*, the number of persons occupying any room in the building or structure while attending a religious service, rite or ceremony must not exceed 30 per cent of the capacity of the particular room. Gatherings are limited to a maximum of 50 people indoors, and a maximum of 100 people outdoors. All persons attending the gathering must comply with public health guidance on physical distancing.

Recommended Websites:

- COVID-19 Advice: Religious Services, Rites or Ceremonies (Ministry of Health): http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/advice_religious_services.pdf
- Region of Waterloo Public Health COVID-19 webpage: RegionofWaterloo.ca/2019NovelCoronavirus
- Ontario Ministry of Health webpage: covid-19.ontario.ca
- Public Health Agency of Canada webpage: canada.ca/coronavirus

- *Province of Ontario, A Framework for Reopening our Province: Stage 3*, which is available online at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/framework-reopening-our-province-stage-3>

**For further information, please call Region of Waterloo Public Health
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