

**Ministry of Labour, Immigration,
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Memorandum to: Health and Safety System Partners

From: Dr. Joel Moody
Chief Prevention Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister

Subject: Prevention of Infectious Respiratory Illness in the Workplace

Earlier this week the Chief Medical Officer of Health strongly recommended the use of masks indoors.

I support his recommendation and would like to remind everyone of the importance of the use of masks as a preventive measure in workplaces. Although viruses spread between people in the same ways whether at work or elsewhere, many settings and activities in workplaces have a higher risk of transmission and workplace control measures should be designed to help reduce those elevated risks.

It is important for employers to have a plan for how they will keep workers and customers safe this respiratory season. Employers must meet or exceed any minimum standards and public health requirements, but they get to choose what measures and policies they will use to help keep workers healthy and their operations fully staffed. Using the Workplace Safety Plan Builder can help employers think through some of the COVID-19 risks and create their own plans.

Several effective control measures reduce the chance that viruses will spread between people – but individual controls aren't perfect. Combining or layering controls is more effective and can ensure some protection remains in place if there is a failure in any one of the controls.

Many public health control measures, such as wearing masks and staying home when sick, are actions that individuals can take. Remember that workplace policies and procedures are an important administrative tool employers can use to help ensure that the right individual actions are being taken in the workplace.

Key control measures to consider:

- The use of masks and respirators by workers and visitors can protect them and those around them from COVID-19 and the seasonal flu. Wearing a mask is a low-cost control measure that can be immediately effective at reducing both short and long-range transmission. A mask that fits better and filters better will work better for both source control and protecting the wearer.
- Vaccinated workers are much less likely to get seriously ill and may be less likely to spread COVID-19 to others. Employers can encourage and support workers to get and stay up to date with all vaccinations including for seasonal flu and COVID-19. However, although vaccination helps to prevent infection and illness, it does not prevent exposure and should not replace workplace controls that help prevent workers from being exposed.
- Control measures based on ventilation and filtration/purification are generally less dependent on individual actions and are an additional precautionary layer that offers a level of protection for everyone in a given space.
- Employers should consider how to support workers to stay home when they are sick, as is consistent with [public health advice](#).

Workplace guidance resources are available to help employers with their safety planning. This includes the updated [workplace masking guidance](#), which is supported by a free, 20-minute recorded [webinar](#).

I know our health and safety system has additional resources to promote as well. Please share this memo and highlight your offerings to your networks at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Dr. Joel Moody, Chief Prevention Officer and Assistant Deputy Minister