

Advice for Canada-Based Staff (CBS)* at Missions Abroad

COVID-19

Public Service Occupational Health Program (PSOHP), Health Canada

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Please note that this advice may change as more information becomes available.

*CBS include employees from Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Department of National Defence (DND), Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA).

The recommendations listed below are based on the current information available on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). More information is available at Canada.ca/coronavirus.

Please refer to PSOHP's general occupational health advisory for general information and advice on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Although the majority of global cases of COVID-19 have been identified initially in mainland China, and in particular, in Hubei Province, local person-to-person transmission, including community transmission of COVID-19 to people who have no clear link to another person with COVID-19 has been reported in multiple countries around the world. An increasing number of countries have now imposed travel restrictions, including quarantine or self-isolation of travellers not only from China, but also from other countries experiencing outbreaks. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 in other countries. Please consult the destination page for the latest travel advice and advisories on travel.gc.ca and the [active travel health notices for COVID-19](#) and the [COVID-19 affected areas list](#).

Staff at missions must stay up to date on rapidly evolving measures and are encouraged to monitor local public health measures on a regular basis.

CBS are expected to follow local public health measures and local laws. If the local public health authorities in the country where the Canadian mission is located are using

broader criteria for self-isolation (e.g. self-isolation of all persons who travelled from mainland China or were in a specific location such as on a certain cruise ship) a mission should modify the screening questions accordingly.

If CBS are concerned about the standard of medical care that is available to them where their mission is located, they should contact their Emergency Watch and Response Centre at + 1-613-996-8885 who will put them in touch with the designated medical consultant.

If CBS have concerns about the local public health measures in place where their mission is located, they may choose to follow recommendations from PHAC in their location if PHAC is recommending a higher level of precaution.

Missions in COVID-19 Affected Areas

Advice to all CBS working at missions abroad in COVID-19 affected areas to prevent illness for this outbreak situation:

- Be aware of the local situation and follow local public health advice.
- Consistently use good hand hygiene measures, which includes frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available. If hands are visibly soiled, wash your hands with soap and water.
- Maintain good respiratory etiquette, such as covering your mouth and nose with your arm or sleeve when coughing and sneezing, disposing of any used tissues as soon as possible, and following with handwashing or use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer where soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth.
- Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces that people touch frequently such as toilets, doorknobs and phones with regular household cleaners or diluted bleach (one part bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) to nine parts water). Follow procedures and safe work practices recommended by your employer.
- Avoid contact with sick people, especially if they have fever, cough, or difficulty breathing.
- Stay up to date on the current situation by reviewing travel advice and advisories regularly at [active travel health notices](#) for COVID-19 affected areas.
- Whenever possible, avoid travel to [areas experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19](#).
- Avoid large public gatherings, crowds or crowded areas if possible.
- Consider telework and/or stagger employee work schedules when possible.
- Consider alternative working arrangements and/or available leave to accommodate employees who may be caring for others who are sick, or in the event of community measures such as school closures.
- Stay home if you become sick to avoid spreading illness to others.

- Self-monitor for symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing).
- If CBS or their family members have other medical conditions or concerns, they can contact their **Emergency Watch and Response Centre at + 1-613-996-8885** who will put them in touch with the designated medical consultant.

There are simple, practical things that individuals and families can do to be prepared in the event of a widespread community outbreak.

- Employees should ensure they have enough essentials on hand should they or someone in their household become ill and unable to leave the home. This includes extra food, prescription medications, personal hygiene products, and cleaning and disinfecting supplies.
- Employees should plan ahead for alternate childcare and workplace arrangements.
- Caregivers should prepare alternate arrangements should they become ill and need someone else to look after a family member.

If employees or family members at missions abroad develop symptoms such as fever, cough, and/or difficulty breathing they should:

- Not go to work, stay at home and self-isolate.
- Inform their supervisor that they are ill.
- Follow the advice of local public health authorities regarding measures to prevent spread of illness to others and how to obtain medical treatment, if deemed necessary.

If employees at missions abroad develop symptoms (fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing) while at the mission, they should:

- Put on a surgical-type mask immediately, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer and maintain a distance of two metres from others.
- Immediately advise their supervisor who should send the employee home (avoiding the use of public transportation) and ask them to follow the advice of the local public health authorities.
- Once at home, self-isolate and follow local public health advice.
- Employees should keep their supervisor informed about their condition. They are to follow local public health advice regarding return to work.

Screening of visitors at missions abroad in COVID-19 Affected Areas

Passive screening

At designated entrances, prior to any visitor interaction, install signage to remind all

visitors that if presenting with symptoms (fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing) they are not to enter the mission.

Active screening

The following standard screening questions can be asked in areas of first contact with visitors at the mission:

1. Are you experiencing any symptoms potentially associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing)?

If they answer “yes” to this question provide a surgical-type mask and alcohol-based hand sanitizer to the visitor, and instruct them to seek medical attention immediately at the nearest appropriate health care facility or as directed by local public health authorities. Visitors can also be instructed to contact the mission by phone.

2. Have you been in contact with a person with symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing) in the past 14 days?

If the visitor answers “yes” to this question do not allow the visitor to enter the facility and ask them to return 14 days or more after their last contact with a person with symptoms of COVID-19. Visitors can also be instructed to contact the mission by phone.

The mission should stay up to date on public health measures that are put in place at the local level, and adapt their screening procedures accordingly.

For employees working directly with visitors at Government of Canada offices abroad:

General Recommendations

- Use environmental and engineering controls already in place (e.g. reception desk with glass barrier, limit number of visitors entering facility).
- Ensure a supply of tissues, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, surgical-type masks and a plastic lined wastebasket are available in the public areas.
- Where possible, keep a distance greater than two metres from other individuals.
- Workplaces are encouraged to increase frequency of cleaning of frequently touched surfaces with an emphasis on high traffic areas and high-touch surfaces.
- Follow any instructions from local public health regarding the exposure risk to others and consult your departmental occupational health and safety unit for advice on cleaning the workplace.

- Departments are encouraged to work with service providers to review cleaning protocols for workplaces.
- Continue to work with your mission security department to coordinate these efforts.

Personal Protective Equipment Recommendations

PSOHP recommends the use of the following personal protective equipment (PPE) and emergency supplies when interacting with visitors to missions abroad:

- Gloves (single use disposable non-sterile medical type gloves) when handling documents and/or personal belongings of visitors. The gloves can be made of latex, vinyl or nitrile. Please note that some people are allergic to latex. Thin, transparent gloves that are often used in food service are not recommended.
- Gloves are recommended when handling any documents that have been handed over to them by a visitor. The gloves should be changed and disposed of in between visitors. It is important to know how to put on and take off gloves and [hand hygiene](#) (use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer or hand washing) must be performed before and after using gloves. It is also important to avoid all contact between gloves and the eyes/nose/mouth to prevent potential transmission of the virus.
- Please follow local public health advice with respect to the use of surgical-type masks.
- Advice from your departmental occupational health and safety personnel is recommended in regards to the choice and use of PPE.
- The use of surgical- type masks by people who do not have symptoms is not recommended by PSOHP, but may be recommended by local public health authorities.

Being prepared also means staying informed. For the latest and most up-to-date information, employees can visit canada.ca/coronavirus, and should remain aware of the local situation and local public health guidance.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have also been prepared and can be found at: GCintranet. <https://intranet.canada.ca/psc-fsc/messages/cmt-538-eng.asp> (accessible only from a Government of Canada device)

Other Sources of Information

- Government of Canada, *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Outbreak update*. [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)
- Government of Canada. *COVID-19: Travel Advice*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice>
- Government of Canada. *COVID-19 List of Affected Areas*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/covid-19-affected-areas-list.html>
- World Health Organization. *Novel Coronavirus*. <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19>
- World Health Organization. *Q&A on coronaviruses*. <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>