

COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool for Gatherings

March 18, 2020

This document is intended for organizers of gatherings or community events in Wellington County, Dufferin County and the City of Guelph. It is based on what is currently known about COVID-19 and will be updated as additional information becomes available.

Why should gatherings be avoided?

Gatherings occur in a range of public spaces and can result in a large number of people being in close contact for extended periods of time. Gatherings can contribute to the transmission of the virus causing the current outbreaks of COVID-19. This has the potential to strain the resources of our local health system. Residents are to recognize the risk of attending gatherings and practice [social distancing](#) as much as possible to manage the spread of illness.

Key recommendations

- The Government of Ontario has **banned all gatherings of over 50 people**. This includes indoor and outdoor sporting events, conferences, meetings, religious or social gatherings, venues, markets, restaurants, bars, libraries, recreation centres, daycares, theatres and other settings.
- For smaller gatherings of **less than 50 people consider cancelling/postponing** the gathering. Otherwise ensure that people are at least 2 metres apart during the gathering.

If you would like to proceed with your small gathering, please complete the risk assessment tool below to determine what safety measures should be taken for the well-being of our community.

Risk assessment tool

- 1) Read the list of risk considerations and implications
- 2) Answer whether the risk consideration is relevant or of concern for your gathering
- 3) Determine whether your gathering is considered high risk
- 4) Review safety measures

Risk considerations	Implications	Importance	Of concern for my gathering? (Yes/No)
Are people attending the gathering coming from regions where there is community transmission of COVID-19 or from countries with unreliable surveillance of the disease? See affected areas list for Ontario and Canada .	If participants are expected from affected areas, the risk of importation/exposure is higher.	High importance	
Are people attending the gathering members of a professional group that might have increased risk of infection, such as healthcare workers?	Healthcare workers may have greater risk of infection due to the possibility of exposure while at work. Consider other possibilities of occupational exposure.	Medium importance	
Are people attending the gathering from demographic groups at greater risk of severe disease (e.g., older adults or people with health concerns)?	Older adults (65+), people with immune compromising conditions and chronic diseases appear to be at greater risk of severe disease, so it's important to protect them from possible exposure to COVID-19 cases. Communication about risk to these attendees should be emphasized.	High importance	
Are people attending the gathering at greater risk of spreading the disease, such as young children?	Young children may be at greater risk of amplifying disease transmission, so it's important to protect them from possible exposure to COVID-19 cases. Reducing transmission among children indirectly protects the population and may therefore reduce the demand on the health care system.	Medium importance	
Are people attending the gathering members of critical infrastructure roles, such as healthcare workers?	If transmission occurs at the gathering, participants may have to self-isolate or may become cases themselves. This could lead to absenteeism and critical infrastructure disruptions if the participants at the gathering represent critical services and industries.	High importance	
How many people are expected to be at the gathering?	The larger the number of participants, the greater the likelihood of a participant having COVID-19. Larger numbers can lead to crowding.	High importance	

Risk considerations	Implications	Importance	Of concern for my gathering? (Yes/No)
Will people attending the gathering be participating in activities that promote transmission?	Activities that could promote transmission of COVID-19 include: singing, cheering, close physical contact such as sharing food or beverages, close conversations, etc.	High importance	
Is the gathering being held indoors, outdoors or both?	Events held outdoors (i.e. higher ventilation) are likely to be lower risk than those held indoors.	Medium importance	
Will participants be consistently within 2 metres of one another?	Respiratory droplets tend to fall within 2 metres of their source, so maintaining a 2-metre distance from others is a precaution to prevent spread.	Medium importance	
How long will participants be gathered at the event?	Longer gatherings present more opportunities for transmission. Sharing overnight accommodations could also increase the risk of transmission.	Medium importance	
Will hand hygiene stations be available throughout the location the gathering is taking place?	Hand hygiene will be performed more frequently if alcohol-based hand sanitizers or hand washing sinks with soap and disposable towels are readily available.	Medium importance	
Can the location of the gathering be configured to maintain a 2-metre distance between participants?	Respiratory droplets tend to fall within 2 metres of their source, so maintaining a 2-metre distance from others is a precaution to prevent spread.	Medium importance	
Will there be health professionals or first responders at the gathering to screen and/or attend to someone who may be experiencing COVID-19 symptoms?	Although attendees with COVID-19 may not necessarily be identified through screening, this measure may identify people with obvious symptoms which could help prevent spread. If someone became ill while at the gathering, a health care professional should be familiar with appropriate personal protection and infection prevention and control measures.	Low importance	

Gathering considered high risk if you answered “Yes” to:

- 1 or more high importance risk considerations**
OR
2 or more medium importance risk considerations

Safety measures

If your gathering was rated high risk, consider **cancelling or postponing**.

If the gathering must proceed, take action before, during and after the gathering to reduce risk of transmission.

Follow these tips:

1. Provide virtual or online options
2. Reduce the number of participants
3. Change the location to a setting that would prevent crowding or re-configure the layout to allow social distancing
4. Stagger participant arrivals and departures
5. Before the gathering, provide clear communication about the risks of attending and advice on how attendees can protect themselves and others
6. Clearly communicate that anyone who is ill (fever, cough or shortness of breath) **must not attend**
7. Clearly communicate that anyone who is [returning from travel outside of Canada](#), [self-monitoring or self-isolating](#) **must not attend**
8. Advise older adults, people with immune compromising conditions and chronic diseases to **not attend**
9. Plan to avoid activities requiring physical contact between participants (e.g., shaking hands, close conversations, etc.)
10. Post signage at the entrance and throughout the gathering and reinforce COVID-19 prevention messaging in any planned speeches. Signage in several languages is available from the [Ministry of Health](#).
11. Encourage hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and social distancing (at least 2 metres apart)
12. Increase the number of hand washing sinks provided with hot water, soap, tissues, paper towels, and hand sanitizer
13. Add or increase the number of dispensers with hand sanitizer in areas frequently accessed (e.g., entrances, exits, hallways, eating areas, washrooms, etc.)
14. Provide packaged refreshments instead of a buffet style
15. Advise anyone who develops symptoms (fever, cough or shortness of breath) to leave and return home
16. Clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are touched by many different people, such as doorknobs, elevator buttons, handrails, light switches, sinks and handles. Use a household disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) written on the package. A DIN is an 8-digit number given by Health Canada that confirms it is approved for use in Canada. For more information, please visit the [Public Health Ontario website](#).

For more information, visit: www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca/coronavirus