



Assessment and Reporting Obligations

Confronting COVID-19

As with any workplace hazard the first step towards prevention begins by identifying it. To this end, the Government of Ontario advises anyone who is experiencing mild to moderate symptoms or otherwise thinks they might have COVID-19 to complete an [online self-assessment](#) to help determine if they should visit an assessment centre and be tested.

On the other hand, anyone can visit an [assessment centre](#) without the self-assessment if they

- ◆ have [COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- ◆ do not have symptoms, but are concerned they might have been exposed, or
- ◆ do not have symptoms, but think they are at risk.

The Ontario government and public health units propose calling 911 or going to a hospital emergency room only if you are having difficulty breathing or experiencing other severe [COVID-19 related symptoms](#).

GROWING CONCERN WITH ASYMPTOMATIC TRANSMISSION

Regardless, broader testing is prudent considering asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic spreaders play a significant role in transmission. According to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the top infectious diseases expert in the United States, "Evidence shows that 25 to 45 per cent of infected people likely don't have symptoms. And we know from epidemiological studies they can transmit to someone who is uninfected even when they're without symptoms."

Consequently, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control have observed, "Asymptomatic transmission enhances the need to scale up the capacity for widespread testing and thorough contact tracing to detect asymptomatic infections, interrupt undetected transmission chains, and further bend the curve downward."





TESTING

Once at the assessment centre, a test will be administered to those who want to be tested. If the results are positive, the **local public health unit will:**

- ◆ contact the individual and advise them to **self-isolate** until virus-free (at least 14 days)
- ◆ perform an investigation and contact tracing
- ◆ contact the employer if the person was at work while infectious for additional information including assistance with tracing
- ◆ provide guidance to the employer about measures to reduce risk of transmission including 14-day self-isolation for those working "closely" with the infected person
- ◆ work with the employer to communicate with workforce and public if required.

Public health must respect the privacy of the individual affected and will only disclose their identity to the employer if necessary to address the potential hazard to others.

EMPLOYER ASSESSMENT OBLIGATIONS

As per public health directives, workers who are unwell should not go to work and should **report their illness-related absence to their supervisor or employer**. Those at work experiencing COVID-19 symptoms should be sent home. **The employer should advise these workers to:**

- ◆ complete the **online self-assessment** or visit an assessment centre, or
- ◆ call Telehealth (1.866.797.000), or
- ◆ call their primary care provider.

If an employer has not been contacted by public health and learns of a confirmed or even presumed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace they should contact **local public health unit** to seek advice in terms of transmission prevention measures or help with contact tracing. In any case, the Ministry of Labour recommends they perform a **workplace assessment** to determine what areas of the workplace might be infected and who else may have been in close contact.



Based on this assessment and guidance from public health, the **employer may need to:**

- ◆ inform co-workers who were in close contact and have them [self monitor](#) or self-isolate for 14 days (if they begin to experience symptoms follow assessment/testing protocol mentioned above and also report to employer)
- ◆ shut down the workplace or portion of the workplace to thoroughly clean and disinfect, and
- ◆ implement other measures based on the advice of public health officials.

Employers are required to protect the privacy of the worker affected.

EMPLOYER REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

If an employer is advised a worker has an illness, including COVID-19, due to an exposure at the workplace or a claim has been filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), the employer **must notify**, within four days, the:

- ◆ Ministry of Labour
- ◆ workplace joint health and safety committee or worker health and safety rep, and
- ◆ trade union, if any.

In the health care sector, illness outbreaks must be monitored and reported to the Public Health Unit as required by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. Outbreaks in long-term care homes must be reported to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care.



Within three days of learning a worker has COVID-19, the employer must report it to the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board](#) (WSIB). Even if an employer is unsure if the COVID-19 case was the result of workplace transmission, the WSIB advises reporting.

WORKER REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

As per public health directives, workers experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or who test positive should not go to work and should [report their illness-related absence to their supervisor or employer](#).

Those testing positive should [file a claim with the WSIB](#).

If a worker believes they were exposed to the COVID-19 virus at work but are not exhibiting symptoms they can [file a WSIB exposure incident form](#) ([construction workers](#) file using a sector specific form). This is a good way to document the exposure should it lead to a confirmed case of COVID-19. In fact, employers who become aware of potential exposure incidents are also encouraged to [file similar exposure incident forms](#).

Further questions or concerns?

Review our other [COVID-19 resources](#) at www.whsc.on.ca. Register for our [COVID-19 training program](#) now available in online virtual classrooms.

Need more help still? Contact your worker member of the joint health and safety committee, worker representative, union representative if you have one, or Workers Health & Safety Centre at contactus@whsc.on.ca or 1-888-869-7950.