



SAFETY AT HOME AFTER WORK



Although all effort is made to reduce exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace, workers can unknowingly carry contamination from the workplace back to their homes and vice versa. As a leading practice, high standards of health and safety should be practiced at work and at home because safeguarding health extends beyond the physical workplace.

Practicing safe behaviors before, during, and after work will help stop the spread and ensure workplaces can remain open and safe.

WHERE DOES CONTAMINATION COME FROM?

In general, close contact with people or touching potentially contaminated items and then your mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands are likely to pose the greatest exposure risks. It is possible that COVID-19 may spread through respiratory droplets and airborne particles (formed when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks or breathes) are inhaled and cause infection. Droplets containing virus can also land on surfaces and objects and be transferred by touch, although this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. What precautions can workers take to reduce contamination at home? What should workers do when they get home from work? How should they enter the home? How should they clean and disinfect? The following key messages will answer the above questions and help workers integrate safe practices into their home environment.

SAFETY PROCEDURES

By establishing and adhering to safety procedures, workers can ensure they are taking the right precautions to reduce contamination at home. The following is a suggested “Return from Work” Procedure:

1. **Ensure the point of entry into the home is equipped with hand sanitizer, cleaning and disinfecting supplies, and a lined waste receptacle.**
 - See “Space Design” section for further detail outlining “hot, warm, and cold zones”.
2. **Sanitize hands and remove shoes and coat.**
 - Place shoes on a shoe tray to reduce tracking dirt and debris around the home. Keep shoes outside the home if possible.
 - If you are driving, consider keeping a clean pair of shoes in your car to change into when you are leaving the workplace, and keep your work shoes in a sealed bag in your trunk.
 - Clear space in your coat closet for frequently worn items. Consider removing non-used clothing or items from your coat closet or store them in a sealed container to reduce cross contamination.
3. **Sanitize hands and remove mask or face covering (if wearing).**
 - Assume the front of mask or face covering is contaminated – do not touch when removing!
 - Discard disposable masks into a lined waste receptacle – do not reuse them!
 - Sanitize hands after removing mask or face covering.
 - Wash reusable face covering and ensure it dries completely before reuse.
4. **Clean and disinfect any items on your person such as keys, badge, phone, and outside of bags (e.g. briefcases, backpacks, purses, etc.) if needed.**
5. **Perform hand hygiene.**
 - Outline a directional path from the point of entry to the nearest hand washing station. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
6. **Shower immediately when you get home.**
 - If possible, do not go into common areas, perform activities/tasks or have prolonged interactions with other people before showering.
7. **Launder your clothes frequently.**
 - As a precaution, workers should change out of their work clothes upon returning home and launder as soon as possible, or set aside and not re-wear them for a couple days.
 - If you need to bring clothes home from work (e.g. uniform, scrubs, etc.) to launder, place them in a sealed bag.
 - Some frontline workers, like those working in a health setting, may consider taking extra precautions with their clothes, such as changing clothes before leaving work.
 - See “Cleaning and Disinfecting” section for further detail.
8. **Wash your lunch container and utensils.**
 - If using a reusable lunch bag, make sure to wash this regularly as well.
 - See “Cleaning and Disinfecting” section for further detail.
9. **Always practice hand hygiene after touching any potentially contaminated objects or clothing.**

SPACE DESIGN

Workers should consider the lay out of their home and make modifications to support infection prevention and control. The following are suggestions for space design and reconfiguring the home:

1. Designate zones as **HOT** (contaminated), **WARM** (transition), and **COLD** (clean) areas.

HOT	WARM	COLD
Assume areas outside the home and items that left the home are contaminated .	Assume points of entry (like front doors, side doors, back doors, and garages) are transition areas.	Assume areas and items outside of hot and warm zones are clean .

2. Consider using signage, floor decals or markings (such as painter's tape) to identify and separate zones if needed. Ensure there are clear distinctions between zones to avoid cross contamination.
 - Once zones are identified, discuss with all members of the household to ensure everyone understands and complies with procedures.
3. Equip the **warm zone** with hand sanitizer, cleaning and disinfecting supplies, and a lined waste receptacle. This is most relevant to the main point of entry into the home.
4. Consider removing non-essential items from the **warm zone** such as plants, decorative items, pillows, etc. and ensure that the remaining furniture is easy to clean and does not retain dirt or moisture around it.
5. Outline a clear directional path to the nearest hand washing station so you can wash your hands with soap and water after leaving the **warm zone**.
6. To prevent cross contamination, upon returning home do not enter **cold zone**, perform activities/tasks or have prolonged interactions with other people before performing hand hygiene, showering, and changing out of work clothes.

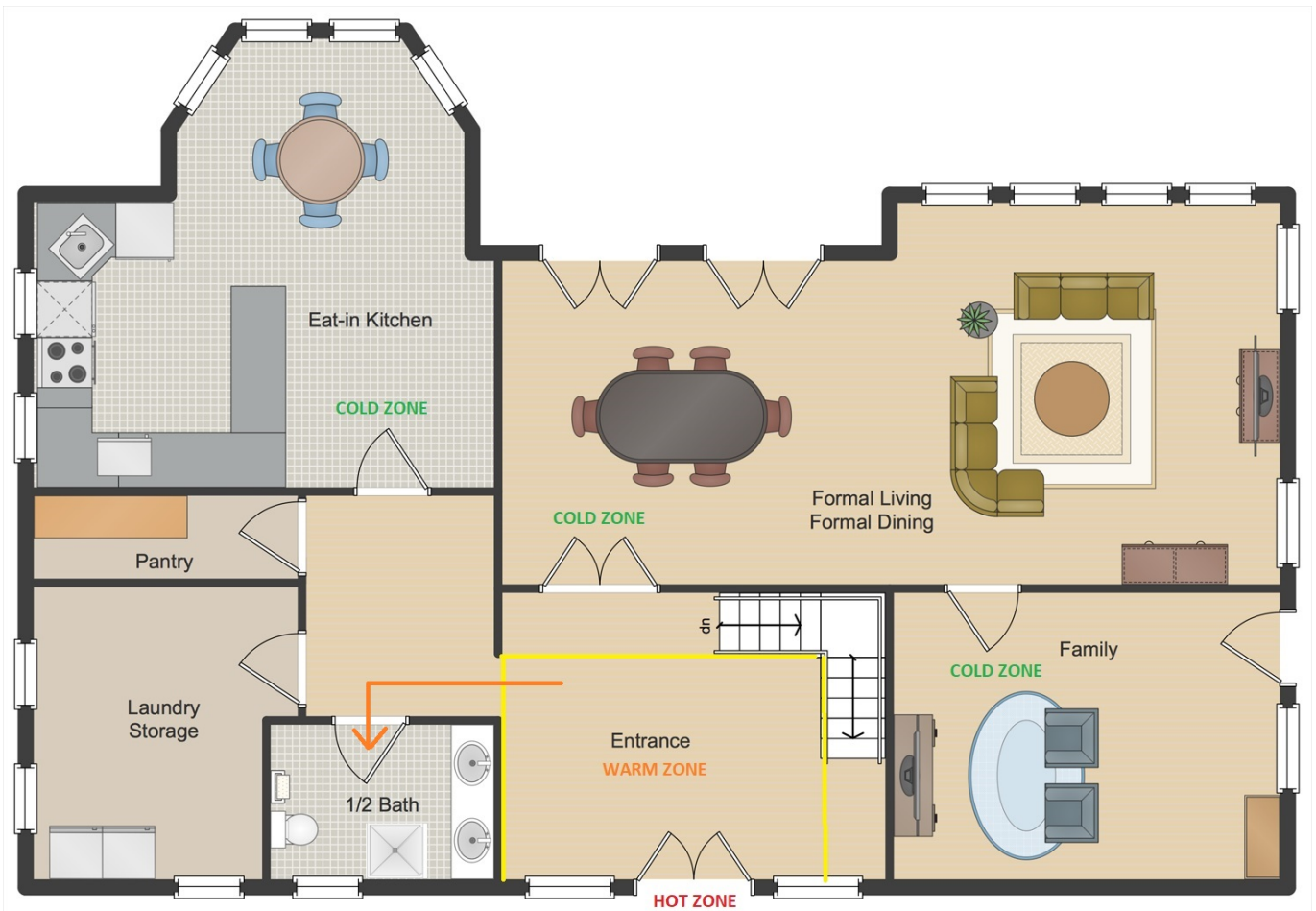


Fig 1: Example schematic of “hot, warm and cold zones” within the home. Highlighting importance of directional path to nearest hand washing station after leaving “warm zone”.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and objects in the home will reduce overall contamination. Commonly touched surfaces should be cleaned more frequently or when visibly soiled. Other considerations:

HARD AND SOFT SURFACES

- Friction of cleaning with soap and water is adequate for most household surfaces.
- Clean any dirty surfaces using soap and water first, then use disinfectant.
- Use Health Canada [approved products](#) to disinfect. Use chemical disinfectants safely. Always read and follow manufacturer’s directions and labels.
- Surfaces can be vacuumed as usual.

ELECTRONICS

- Consider using a cover or protective screen (especially for phones and tablet devices).
- Disinfect with alcohol-based wipes or sprays.

FOOD AND UTENSILS

- Avoid sharing food, drinks, utensils, and containers if possible.
- Wear gloves and wash dishes with regular detergent and hot water, or in dishwasher.

CLOTH MATERIAL

- Do not shake dirty laundry.
- Regular laundry detergent can be used.
- Use warmest temperature setting for washer and dryer. Ensure clothes are dried completely.
- Run the washing machine empty to rinse out the machine if needed.
- Reusable face coverings can be washed with regular laundry.
- Always perform hand hygiene after touching dirty laundry or face coverings.

SELF-MONITORING FOR SYMPTOMS

Workers need to know how to self-monitor for symptoms and what to do if they screen positive.

- Common symptoms include:
 - Fever (temperature of $\geq 37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$)
 - Cough (new or worsening)
 - Shortness of breath
- Keep updated with the Ministry of Health's [reference document for symptoms](#) as the situation of COVID-19 continues to evolve.
- Workers should:
 - not go to work if they have symptoms associated with COVID-19;
 - inform their supervisor and/or occupational health department;
 - contact their primary care provider or Telehealth for further guidance
- Employers need to:
 - [report](#) positive cases to applicable authorities and workplace parties;
 - establish criteria for return to work

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid taking any unnecessary work items home with you.
- Practice stringent hand hygiene before touching your face, after coughing or sneezing, before and after eating, before and after leaving home or work.
- Practice proper cough/sneeze etiquette. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and discard, or cough/sneeze into your elbow. Perform hand hygiene immediately after.
- Avoid touching the face, mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.
- Maintain physical distancing (at least 2 metres distance) with anyone outside your immediate household. Wear a [mask or face covering](#) as required by law and when you are unable to maintain physical distancing. In some situations or circumstances, PPE may be required.
- Stay home if you are ill.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

If you are sick or caring for someone with COVID-19 at home, the above suggestions and recommendations may not apply. Refer to Health Canada's [advice](#) for caring for someone with COVID-19 at home, including how to protect yourself, your family and others in your community.

REFERENCES

CDC – [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home](#)

CDC – [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Government of Ontario – [Face Coverings and Face Masks](#)

Health Canada – [Non-medical Masks and Face Coverings](#)

Ministry of Health – [Reference Document for Symptoms](#)

NIOSH – [Protect Your Family: Reduce Contamination at Home](#)

PSHSA - <https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>

WHO – [Coronavirus Disease Advice for the Public](#)

<https://www.conceptdraw.com/solution-park/floor-plans>

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