

# COVID-19 AND OTHER RESPIRATORY ILLNESSES: SAFETY GUIDELINES

**Date:** March 2, 2023

**Division/group:** Occupational Health and Safety, and Business Continuity and Emergency Management on behalf of the Critical Incident Response Team

## INTRODUCTION

These safety guidelines apply to all Humber College and University of Guelph-Humber operations and premises.

As of July 1st, 2022, the COVID-19 measures in place at Humber College and the University of Guelph-Humber became aligned with the province's latest public health directives. On November 14, 2022, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health strongly recommended that Ontarians wear masks in indoor public spaces and social settings to help address the impact of three respiratory diseases – COVID-19, Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), and seasonal influenza. This document, originally written to address COVID-19, has been updated to include these other respiratory illnesses as well as seasonal colds.

This document is intended to provide guidance as Humber continues to focus on our shared responsibility for the health and safety of the Humber community. This document will be made available to all students, employees and contractors who are required to be on campus.

The college will continue to monitor the recommendations, requirements and directives related to COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses issued by the province and municipalities, and will make any necessary changes to operations and this guidance document, based on government directives and public health recommendations.

Thank you to the Humber community for its participation and support of COVID measures throughout the pandemic. Let us continue to work together to maintain a safe environment for all members of the Humber community.

## VACCINE REQUIREMENTS

- As of May 2nd, 2022, Humber's COVID-19 vaccine mandate was paused. Students and staff are not required to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination to work or study on campus.
- Vaccinations continue to be our best defence against these infectious respiratory illnesses. In keeping with [Public Health](#) recommendations, Humber strongly encourages each member of the Humber community to stay current with the influenza vaccine and COVID-19 booster doses, to best protect against serious illnesses.

## SELF-SCREENING AND REPORTING

- Individuals with RSV, seasonal flu or colds are not required to report their illness to the College. If unwell, individuals are to stay home until symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours.
- Any individual who is experiencing symptoms or has tested positive for COVID-19 is to take [Ontario's self-assessment](#) and follow the recommended measures, including those for self-isolation, self-monitoring and masking.
- For all other COVID-related inquiries, students and staff can contact the Toronto Public Health Hotline at 416-338-7600 or [publichealth@toronto.ca](mailto:publichealth@toronto.ca). For all other health concerns:
  - › Students can contact the Student Wellness and Accessibility Centre at [swac@humber.ca](mailto:swac@humber.ca).
  - › Employees can contact Occupational Health and Safety at [occhealth@humber.ca](mailto:occhealth@humber.ca).

- Students living in residence who are isolating as a result of COVID-19 must complete the [Residence Isolation Reporting Form](#).
- Any individual who is already onsite and begins to exhibit symptoms is to leave the premises immediately, and follow the steps outlined above.
- If ill and required to self-isolate, students and employees are to follow standard processes for notifying their professors and/or managers.
- Employees who believe they have a campus-acquired case of COVID-19 are to notify Occupational Health and Safety at [occhealth@humber.ca](mailto:occhealth@humber.ca). A WSIB claim will be filed for any employee who becomes ill because of exposure to COVID-19 in the Humber workplace. An occupational illness report will also be filed with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

## PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- There are no physical distancing requirements at the college at this time. However, when planning meetings, events or gatherings, for comfort reasons, considerations can include:
  - › Using physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass) in areas where employees are public-facing (e.g., service desks) and meeting with many individuals over the workday.
  - › Using a larger room/space when people are gathering, to avoid overcrowding.
  - › Planning meetings and events that can be attended both onsite and remotely.
  - › Incorporating a workplace design that allows some individuals to work at a 6-foot distance from others, if possible.
  - › Wearing a mask in a crowded elevator or using the stairs if able to do so.

## MASKING

- As of November 16, 2022, in line with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health's recommendations, the College strongly encourages everyone to wear a mask while in public and indoor settings on college premises.
- Respect is mandatory. Humber continues to be a mask-friendly environment. We ask that all community members respect the choice of others to wear or not wear a mask.
- Health care settings (e.g., health centre) and individual programs may require their students and employees to wear a mask (or other personal protective equipment) as part of the safety measure requirements within their operations or programs, particularly if it is an industry-related standard.
- It is recommended that the mask worn should be a medical mask (e.g., surgical, N95/KN95), or a three-layer cloth mask. Masks should be well-fitting and of high quality.
- Public health recommendations include the use of a well-fitted mask in all public settings, including on campus, for a period of 10 days from the start of the illness for:
  - › Those who have tested positive for COVID-19, or
  - › Those who have COVID or other respiratory symptoms.
  - › Wearing a mask for 10 days is also recommended for those who have had close contact with someone who has COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses.
- Humber will continue to monitor and review all public health guidance and government directives for changes to mask requirements..

## HEATING, VENTILATION AND AIR CONDITIONING (HVAC) SYSTEMS

- The college will continue to ensure that its building ventilation systems are maintained in good operation and meet current ventilation and filtration standards recommended by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE).
- The highest efficiency filters that are compatible with the building HVAC system are being used wherever possible. In keeping with ASHRAE recommendations, HVAC filters at the college have been upgraded to Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) 13 filters.
- Daily and regular monitoring of HVAC systems will continue, as well as standard preventative maintenance of such systems.
- For leased properties, the appropriate property management group or landlord will be contacted to ensure that the above is carried out.

## INFECTION PREVENTION PRACTICES (HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE, AND CLEANING AND DISINFECTION)

- Everyone is reminded to continue to use good practices for the prevention of infections such as COVID-19, RSV, the seasonal flu, and colds. Such practices include:
  - › Frequent hand washing or use of hand sanitizer;
  - › Coughing or sneezing into a tissue or their elbows;
  - › Avoiding touching the face with unwashed hands; and
  - › Staying at home if feeling unwell until symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours.
- Handwashing facilities are available in all washrooms. Facilities will ensure that washrooms are checked for appropriate supplies and cleaned throughout the day.
- Hand sanitizer stations are available throughout all campus facilities.
- Disinfectant wipe units have been installed in classrooms, labs and office areas. Staff and students can continue to clean their workspace and equipment before and after use as needed.
- Facilities will continue to clean classrooms, labs and common spaces at the end of each day, and will conduct regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces (e.g., elevators, door handles, stair rails, washroom sinks, water fountains).
- References for proper hand hygiene, and respiratory etiquette include:
  - › [Poster: How to Clean Your Hands](#) (Toronto Public Health)
  - › [Poster: Cover Your Cough](#) (Toronto Public Health)

## EMPLOYEE AWARENESS

- All employees are encouraged to read these guidelines from time to time to ensure they are up to date on any changes made to the plan as a result of government or public health direction. A notice will be posted in the Communique whenever significant updates to the guidelines are made.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Timely communication will be directed, as needed, to the Humber community regarding COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses and measures

## ONGOING MONITORING AND SAFETY MEASURES

Given the unknowns related to the evolution of the pandemic and the emergence of new COVID-19 variants, RSV, seasonal flu and colds, Humber's and the University of Guelph-Humber's safety measures may change depending on public health directives or the recommendations of public health authorities.

The College, through its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) or the COVID-19 Watch Group, will continue to regularly:

- Monitor all levels of government and public health authorities for activities and information related to COVID-19, RSV, seasonal flu and colds, including regulatory changes, community outbreaks and public health directives;
- Review the impact and need for any follow-up actions, changes to existing policies or practices, or communication strategies; and
- Review and update any related measures as per changes and direction from either the provincial government or the Ministry of Health.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Your mental health and well-being matters. It is especially important that our employees and students feel supported during this pandemic.

- Students:
  - › Go to [Student Services Update](#) for available programs and services.
- Employees:
  - › Inform your manager if your work activities are impacted and discuss options for addressing these.
  - › Resources for employees can be found on [Humber's Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness](#) website, including learning and well-being initiatives.
  - › [Humber's Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) provides short-term counselling, and other services and supports to full time employees, and is available 24/7.
  - › Contact Occupational Health and Safety ([occhealth@humber.ca](mailto:occhealth@humber.ca)) if you need to request a workplace medical accommodation.