

GUIDE

Guide to Creating a Communicable Disease Prevention Plan



INTRODUCTION

This guide provides a four-step process to help employers develop a communicable disease prevention plan for their workplaces.

Acknowledgement

SAFE Work Manitoba gratefully acknowledges WorkSafeBC for permission to adapt content.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION

This guide is not meant for workplaces that are required to have an existing infection prevention and control plan related to communicable disease, such as health care employers. See the [Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation, Part 39: Health Care Facilities](#) or refer to [Routine Practices and Additional Precautions: Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care](#).

We learned a lot during the COVID-19 pandemic and need to improve our protections from communicable diseases.

This guide provides information for employers to develop a communicable disease prevention plan. An effective plan includes ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease transmission and additional measures for when there's an elevated risk of communicable disease.

Managing communicable disease at your workplace is part of an effective safety and health program. For more information, please refer to:

- [SAFE Work Manitoba COVID Tool Kit](#)
- [Communicable Disease Management Protocols](#)
- [Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation s 7.4 \(1\)\(2\)](#)

Developing a Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

A *communicable disease* is an illness caused by the transmission of an infectious agent or its toxic products directly or indirectly from an infected person, animal or plant, an inanimate object or the environment. Examples of communicable diseases that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-19, norovirus and seasonal influenza.

This guide describes a four-step process to help employers develop a communicable disease prevention plan. Your plan may be supported by policies, signage or other materials, as appropriate to your workplace and the level of risk. Some employers may benefit from documenting their plan to assist in planning and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices and policies. A template is provided as a separate word document for that purpose.

Step 1: Assess the risk

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease transmission in your workplace. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health during periods of elevated risk.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases may change from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

- Monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by your Regional Medical Officer of Health, Chief Occupational Medical Officer or Chief Provincial Public Health Officer if it's related to your industry, region or workplace. This information includes orders, guidance, notices and recommendations.



Step 2: Implement measures, practices and policies to reduce the risk

Ongoing measures — maintain at all times

As an employer, you must implement and maintain reasonable control measures at all times. They may include the following:

- Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g., fever, chills, coughing, diarrhea) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
- Ensure your workers are practising appropriate hand hygiene by washing their hands or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and provide them with the appropriate facilities and supplies. See the [Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation - Parts 4.9 \(1\) and \(2\)](#). Use signage to remind workers to perform hand hygiene regularly and to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning and disinfection processes that are appropriate to your industry and work practices.
- Make sure building ventilation is adequate, and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For further information on ventilation requirements, consult a ventilation specialist or Manitoba Health.
- Support employees in receiving vaccinations for any vaccine-preventable diseases.

Additional measures — implement as advised by Public Health

As an employer, you must implement and maintain reasonable control measures at all times. They may include the following:

- During a period of elevated risk, the Regional Medical Officer of Health, Chief Occupational Medical Officer or Chief Provincial Public Health Officer will provide information and guidance about the level of risk and how workplaces can reduce it. The measures you'll need to implement will depend on the type of infectious agent and methods of transmission.
- Follow all direction from the Regional Medical Officer of Health, Chief Occupational Medical Officer or Chief Provincial Public Health Officer.
- Follow all orders, guidance, recommendations and notices issued by the Regional Medical Officer of Health, Chief Occupational Medical Officer or Chief Provincial Public Health Officer that are relevant to your industry, region or workplace.
- Depending on the guidance that public health officials provide, you may need to assess the workplace to identify areas, activities and processes that can pose a risk to workers. You may also need to implement appropriate control measures to reduce the risk, following the direction of Public Health and Workplace Safety and Health. For more information, please see [Manitoba Health and Seniors Care | Province of Manitoba](#).



Step 3: Communicate measures, practices and policies

- Make sure everyone entering the workplace receives information about your measures, practices and policies for managing communicable disease. A template is provided at the end of this guide that employers may find useful for this purpose.
- Ensure all workers understand the measures in place at your workplace.
- Ensure there is a recommendation to inform workers of policies related to staying home when ill, sick leave and working from home overall.
- Post signage in your workplace to support the measures you have in place.
- Make sure supervisors are knowledgeable about your measures, practices and policies, and incorporate these into supervision practices at the workplace.
- Make sure workers are knowledgeable about prevention measures, practices and policies. Provide information, signage and materials to workers in a language they understand.
- Be mindful that some aspects of managing communicable disease in the workplace may raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek advice on these issues as necessary.

Step 4: Monitor your workplace and update your plan as necessary

- Continuously evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.
- Workplace safety and health committees and representatives play an important role. When identifying and resolving safety issues, involve workplace safety and health committees or safety and health representatives (or in smaller workplaces, other workers).
- Use workplace inspections and ongoing supervision in the workplace to ensure measures are functioning properly, followed and maintained.
- Monitor the guidance, notices, orders and recommendations from Public Health and Workplace Safety and Health (as required in step 1). Adjust your plan as necessary.
- Monitor your workplace and risk level.
- Adjust your measures, practices and policies as necessary.
- Update your plan to reflect changes in your workplace, including work processes, staff and premises.
- Make sure workers know how to raise safety and health concerns.





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