COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION PLAN

4-STEP APPROACH AND TEMPLATE

FOR NEW BRUNSWICK WORKPLACES

Communicable disease is a serious threat to all New Brunswickers. As an employer, you're required under the *Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Act* (see Section 9(1)(a)) to take every reasonable precaution to ensure the health and safety of your employees. This includes prevention efforts to eliminate or minimize the risk of communicable disease transmission in your workplace.

This four-step approach and template can help. As always, when developing a health and safety plan for your workplace, involve your joint health and safety committee (JHSC) or health and safety representative(s).

Integrate your communicable disease prevention plan (CDPP) in your existing health and safety program or in a separate policy.

In addition to this template, consider other tools available from Health Canada, the Government of New Brunswick (GNB), industry associations and the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS).

For more information on healthy and safe workplaces, including communicable disease prevention, please go to worksafenb.ca.

tip!

Use this template in conjunction with **Working Safely Amid COVID-19 and other Communicable Diseases.**

STEP 1: ASSESS THE RISK

Preventing communicable disease requires assessing your risk for communicable disease transmission in the workplace. The risk of certain communicable diseases may increase from time to time or seasonally. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

The risk level at each workplace differs due to various job roles, workplace population, job tasks, staff vaccination rates, access to the public, workspace and level/extent of ventilation.

❑ Designate someone to monitor and assess communicable disease-related information issued by New Brunswick's Chief (or regional) Medical Officer of Health or WorkSafeNB and determine the impact and risk to your workplace. This information could include orders, guidance, advice or recommendations.

❑ Review your risk of communicable diseases by evaluating the following:

◼ How likely it is that workers could come into contact with people who have a communicable disease, including other workers, suppliers, clients and customers?

◼ Are employees in the workplace interacting with the public? Is there public access?

◼ How do people interact in your workplace? Can physical distancing be maintained reliably? Do people wear masks when interacting?

◼ Is the workplace part of a vulnerable sector? Are employees in the workplace interacting with persons from the vulnerable* sector?

◼ Is information on vaccination status of people interacting in the workplace available? Does a vaccination policy exist?

Refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada's COVID-19: Prevention and Risks and Reducing COVID-19 risk in community settings: A tool for operators.

Ask yourself: How do people interact in the workplace? Can physical distancing be maintained reliably?

* Vulnerable sector includes people: over 50 or under two years (24 months); immunocompromised; pregnant; live or work in a hospital, long-term care facility, correctional facility or shelter, who are precariously housed; or work for the Extra-Mural Program or Ambulance New Brunswick.

STEP 2: IMPLEMENT MEASURES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Based on your assessment, develop a set of measures, practices and policies to meet the needs in your workplace. Use a layered approach following the hierarchy of controls chart for communicable diseases.

Communicable disease prevention may involve implementing additional measures when directed to do so by Public Health or during periods of elevated risk.

REQUIRED AT ALL WORKPLACES AT ALL TIMES

❑ Consult your joint health and safety committee (JHSC), health and safety representative or other workers on required and recommended measures in your communicable disease prevention plan.

❑ Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies. This includes providing hand-sanitizing supplies when facilities with running water are not readily available. Use signage and policies to remind people to wash their hands regularly. (See section 6 of Regulation 91-191).

❑ Ensure your building ventilation is adequate and ventilation systems are maintained and functioning as designed. (See section 20 of Regulation 91-191).

❑ Implement measures as directed by Public Health. The measures you must implement will depend on the type of disease and the methods of transmission.
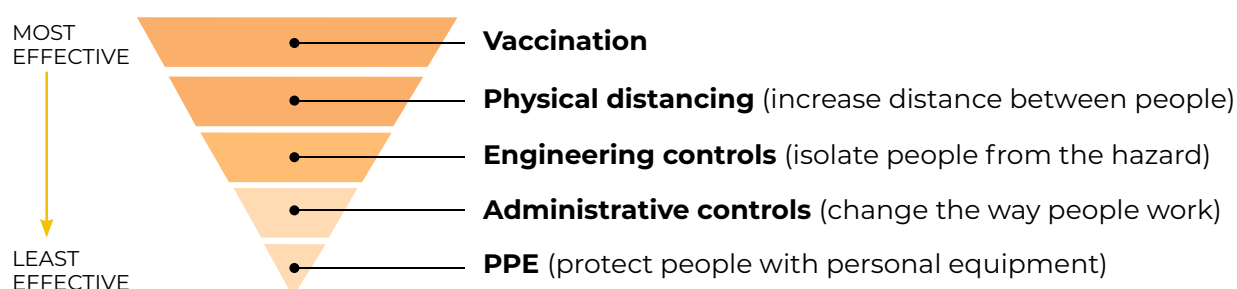
See examples of appropriate measures, practices and policies using the **hierarchy of controls** chart.

MEASURES TO CONSIDER (DEPENDING ON YOUR WORKPLACE RISK ASSESSMENT)

❑ Establish a cleaning schedule to maintain a healthy and safe environment. Ensure cleaning and disinfecting products are in accessible areas to encourage workers and patrons to self-clean and disinfect (examples: near shared equipment, shopping carts and common spaces like meeting rooms and lunch rooms).

❑ Foster a non-discriminatory atmosphere where employees and patrons feel comfortable and welcome to practise additional preventive measures, such as wearing a mask and keeping their distance from others.

❑ Develop policies to support workers who have symptoms of a communicable disease (examples: fever, chills, coughing) so they can avoid going to the workplace when sick. Encourage them to get tested if they have symptoms.

❑ Support physical distancing where possible. Consider protective barriers to limit employee and patron exposure to all communicable diseases and provide ongoing protection for people not vaccinated or vulnerable employees and patrons.

❑ Post signage at entrances to discourage employees and patrons from entering the establishment when sick.

❑ Encourage employees to be fully vaccinated and receive boosters for vaccine-preventable conditions. This may include connecting employees with reliable information about vaccines. We encourage you to provide time during the workday to allow employees to get their communicable disease vaccinations.

❑ Use directional signage to indicate traffic flow and separate entrances and exits to avoid congregation in one area.

❑ Develop a masking policy to clarify where and when employees must wear a mask and the type of mask acceptable in the workplace.

STEP 2: IMPLEMENT MEASURES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS CHART FOR COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

MOST EFFECTIVE

LEAST EFFECTIVE

Vaccination

Physical distancing (increase distance between people)

Engineering controls (isolate people from the hazard)

Administrative controls (change the way people work)

PPE (protect people with personal equipment)

For many communicable diseases, vaccination is most effective, then physical distancing, engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment (PPE). Try to incorporate all or as many controls as possible for your best protection!

- **VACCINATION:** Vaccines help protect employees and the people around them.

- **PHYSICAL DISTANCING:** Consider restructuring physical settings and responsibilities to allow a minimum distance of two metres (increase space between people or reduce the number of people within a space at a given time). When possible, give employees the option to work from home.

- **ENGINEERING CONTROLS:** Consider having physical barriers between people when physical distancing is not possible. Maintain effective ventilation and/or increase ventilation.*

- **ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS:** Review and update communicable disease and sickness-related policies, and share these often with employees. Encourage all employees who are sick to stay home.

- **PPE:** Have employees wear appropriate PPE.

* In this instance, increased ventilation includes choosing outdoor rather than indoor spaces, and the addition of fresh air, when available. It does not include use of fans or similar systems to blow, recirculate or mobilize air without the addition of fresh air.

STEP 3: COMMUNICATE MEASURES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Keeping everyone informed takes planning and co-ordination. Ensure everyone entering the workplace, including employees, patrons and contractors, receives information about your measures, practices and policies for mitigating risk of communicable disease. Consider multiple means of communication and provide the reason for any change in health procedures. Ensure managers and supervisors are advised before general staff so they can be prepared to answer questions.

❑   Advise your managers and supervisors on measures, practices and policies and ensure they understand their responsibility as leaders to ensure the measures are followed.

❑   Ensure all workers are informed of all communicable disease preventative measures in the workplace and their responsibilities.

❑   Ensure workers are informed on policies for staying home when sick and working from home.

❑   Post signage to support and reinforce the measures you have implemented.

❑   Be mindful that some aspects of mitigating the risk of communicable disease transmission in the workplace may raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek advice from legal or other experts on these issues as necessary.

❑   Ensure workers know how to raise health and safety concerns.

❑   Consider the steps you must take if there is a work refusal related to communicable disease.

❑   Follow and share any direction from Public Health.

Like all health and safety efforts, ensure employees are aware of your communicable disease prevention measures.

STEP 4: CONTINUALLY EVALUATE AND UPDATE THE PLAN

Communicable diseases can spread rapidly, affecting a specific region or, in the case of COVID-19, the entire world. Continue to monitor risk of communicable disease through Health Canada and the Government of New Brunswick, and revise your plan appropriately. Whenever you have a change in workplace procedures or processes, consider how this may affect the communicable disease prevention plan. In addition, monitor for compliance. Are workers following the plan? If not, why? Consider ongoing improvements to ensure your workplace is mitigating the risk as much as possible.

❑　Review Public Health directives, notices and advisories and revise your plan as necessary.

❑　Update your plan to reflect changes in your workplace, including changes to work processes, staffing and premises.

❑　Conduct workplace inspections and incorporate ongoing supervision to ensure measures are functioning properly. Check to ensure they are followed and maintained.

❑　Monitor your workplace and risk level along with the guidance, orders and recommendations from Public Health. Adjust your plan as necessary.

❑　When identifying and resolving safety issues, consult your JHSC or health and safety representative (or, in smaller workplaces, other workers).

❑　Seek ongoing feedback, suggestions, etc. from all staff: employees, managers, JHSC members, etc.

❑　Communicate the changes so everyone in the workplace is aware of their responsibilties.

Ensure your plan meets current needs! Continue to review and revise your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION PLAN
TEMPLATE FOR NEW BRUNSWICK EMPLOYERS

Use this template as is or adapt it to meet your specific workplace needs. This template is not meant for workplaces that have an existing infection prevention and control (IPC) plan related to communicable disease, such as health care authorities and long-term care facilities.

STEP 1: ASSESS THE RISK

Document your process for monitoring and reviewing communicable disease-related information issued by New Brunswick's Chief (or regional) Medical Officer of Health and WorkSafeNB. Include answers to the following questions.

- Who is the person responsible for reviewing and monitoring information?
- What is the process and/or frequency for the information review?

Document risks specific to your workplace. Include answers to the following questions.

- How likely is it that workers could come into contact with people who have the virus, including other workers, suppliers, clients and customers?
- Are employees in the workplace interacting with the public? Is there public access?
- How do people interact in your workplace? Can physical distancing be maintained reliably? Do people wear masks when interacting?
- Is the workplace part of a vulnerable sector? Are employees in the workplace interacting with persons from the vulnerable sector?
- Is information on vaccination status of people interacting in the workplace available? Does a vaccination policy exist?

Helpful resources: Reducing COVID-19 risk in community settings: A tool for operators

STEP 2: IMPLEMENT MEASURES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Document cleaning/disinfection practices here. Include answers to the following questions.

- What is the cleaning schedule at my workplace? Who is responsible for cleaning? Do cleaners have appropriate supplies and training to do their job effectively and safely?
- Are workers and patrons provided easy access to cleaning or disinfection supplies to allow them to self-clean or disinfect?

Document employee behaviour support here. Include answers to the following questions.

- Do I have the required hand-hygiene facilities and appropriate supplies? (See Section 6(1)).
- Do I have policies and signage to remind workers to wash or sanitize hands?
- Do I have a policy for working from home and staying at home for employees who are sick? If so, does it need to be updated?
- Does my risk assessment indicate the need for a masking policy and/or physical distancing?

Helpful resources: Handwashing poster, Use hand sanitizer, Prevent infection with soap and water.

STEP 2: IMPLEMENT MEASURES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES (continued)

Document ventilation and air circulation measures. Include answers to the following questions.

- Is the building ventilation adequate? Are ventilation systems properly maintained and functioning as designed? (See Section 20.)
- For employers without ventilation or direct control of their building's ventilation system: What measures do I take to improve air circulation? (See Section 20.)

Document additional measures during elevated risk.

- During a period of elevated risk, what additional measures might our workplace need to implement?

Helpful resource: Ventilation and air circulation (FAQs). Air Quality (safety topic).

Step 3: COMMUNICATE MEASURES, PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Document your answers to questions here.

- How are measures, practices and policies communicated at the workplace?
- Identify any workplace signage and other tools (e-mail, intranet, etc.) used to communicate measures.

- How are supervisors and managers informed of measures, practices and policies. How are they kept aware of changes?
- Do I advise supervisors and managers before general staff so they can be prepared to answer questions?

- What steps will I take if there is a work refusal related to communicable disease?

Helpful resource: Three Rights.

STEP 4: CONTINUALLY UPDATE THE PLAN TO REFLECT CHANGING RISK LEVELS AND WORK PRACTICES

Document your answers to questions here.

- How is the JHSC or health and safety representative(s) involved in the ongoing evaluation of measures, practices and policies at my workplace?

- What is the workplace procedure for workers to identify health and safety concerns? Are staff members aware of the procedure? Do they follow it?

- How do I ensure measures are functioning properly, and that they are followed and maintained (supervision, workplace inspections, etc.)?

OTHER

Use this space to document any other important information (updates, reference materials, consultation with JHSC/ workers, etc.).