



WORKING SAFELY AMID COVID-19

AND OTHER COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

GUIDE FOR NEW BRUNSWICK WORKPLACES



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OUR NEED TO ADAPT



When COVID-19 introduced itself in the first quarter of 2020, the world was forced to quickly adapt. The virus changed not only the way we work, but the way we live. Wearing masks, physical distancing, working from home and online meetings became our “new normal.”

As the Government of New Brunswick’s (GNB) eases restrictions, COVID-19 will continue to create challenges. It will stay, as will other communicable diseases like H1N1 and influenza.

This guide offers information to help you operate your workplace* safely amid risk of any communicable disease.

WHAT HASN’T CHANGED?

As restrictions loosen, this remains: As an employer, you are responsible for the health and safety of anyone working in or visiting your workplace.

The first step, always, is determining the risk of communicable disease exposure and transmission in your workplace. Jobs within a workplace vary, and so too will exposure risk. Performing an overall workplace risk assessment will help you determine appropriate precautionary measures.

Every workplace should also have at least one person dedicated to reviewing the communicable disease updates from GNB, Public Health Canada and WorkSafeNB and relaying the information to the business.

WorkSafeNB recommends every workplace have a communicable disease prevention plan.** This

plan would address how to prevent COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, and what to do if an outbreak occurred in your workplace. WorkSafeNB has developed a [four-step approach and template](#) to help.

BE SUPPORTIVE AND INVOLVE EVERYONE

As we ease out of this pandemic, not everyone will feel comfortable with loosened restrictions. Be supportive of your employees, contractors, patrons, volunteers, customers, etc. Be accommodating to those who prefer to continue to mask, maintain physical distancing and practise other prevention measures.

Remember: WorkSafeNB is available to guide you on COVID-19 and other communicable disease prevention. New Brunswick’s employer and worker groups may also support you in sharing helpful tips and solutions.

We encourage you to read this document thoroughly, review the communicable disease prevention plan approach and template, and engage staff in meaningful discussion on ways you can all maintain a safe space for your organization.

The first step is determining the risk of communicable disease exposure and transmission in your workplace.

* A workplace is any place of work, including businesses, non-profits and community organizations.

** With exception to workplaces that have an existing infection prevention and control plan related to communicable disease.



Raymond has a home inspection business. He is fully vaccinated from COVID-19 and influenza. While he isn't required by Public Health to wear a mask, he keeps one on him at all times and offers to wear it when working closely with others or when working in places that include people from vulnerable populations.



Marissa owns a small retail shop. She is keeping some COVID-19 prevention measures in place as restrictions ease. A hand disinfection station remains at the entrance and a Plexiglas barrier between the attendant and customer continues to limit exposure at the payment desk. She reminds her employees to stay home when sick.

every WORKPLACE

foundations to communicable disease prevention



STAY INFORMED

Be attentive to public health updates. Continue to monitor directives, guidelines and advisories from [GNB](#), [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and [WorkSafeNB](#).



INVOLVE YOUR STAFF

Consult with staff, your [joint health and safety committee](#) (JHSC) or health and safety representative, as appropriate on policies, training and education. Your employees can help with many aspects of communication, support and more.



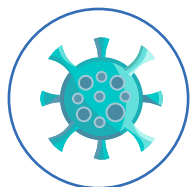
CREATE A COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION PLAN

Develop a communicable disease prevention plan* in consultation with your JHSC, health and safety representative or, in smaller workplaces, other workers. WorkSafeNB has developed a [four-step approach and template](#).



COMMUNICATE

Inform your supervisors and employees of the communicable disease prevention plan. Keep them aware of any changes that affect them. Share with your employees the importance of protecting themselves and others from illness and injury.



MONITOR AND ADAPT

Watch to ensure your communicable disease prevention plan is being followed as prepared. As risk levels change or staff identify concerns, reassess your plan and adapt accordingly.

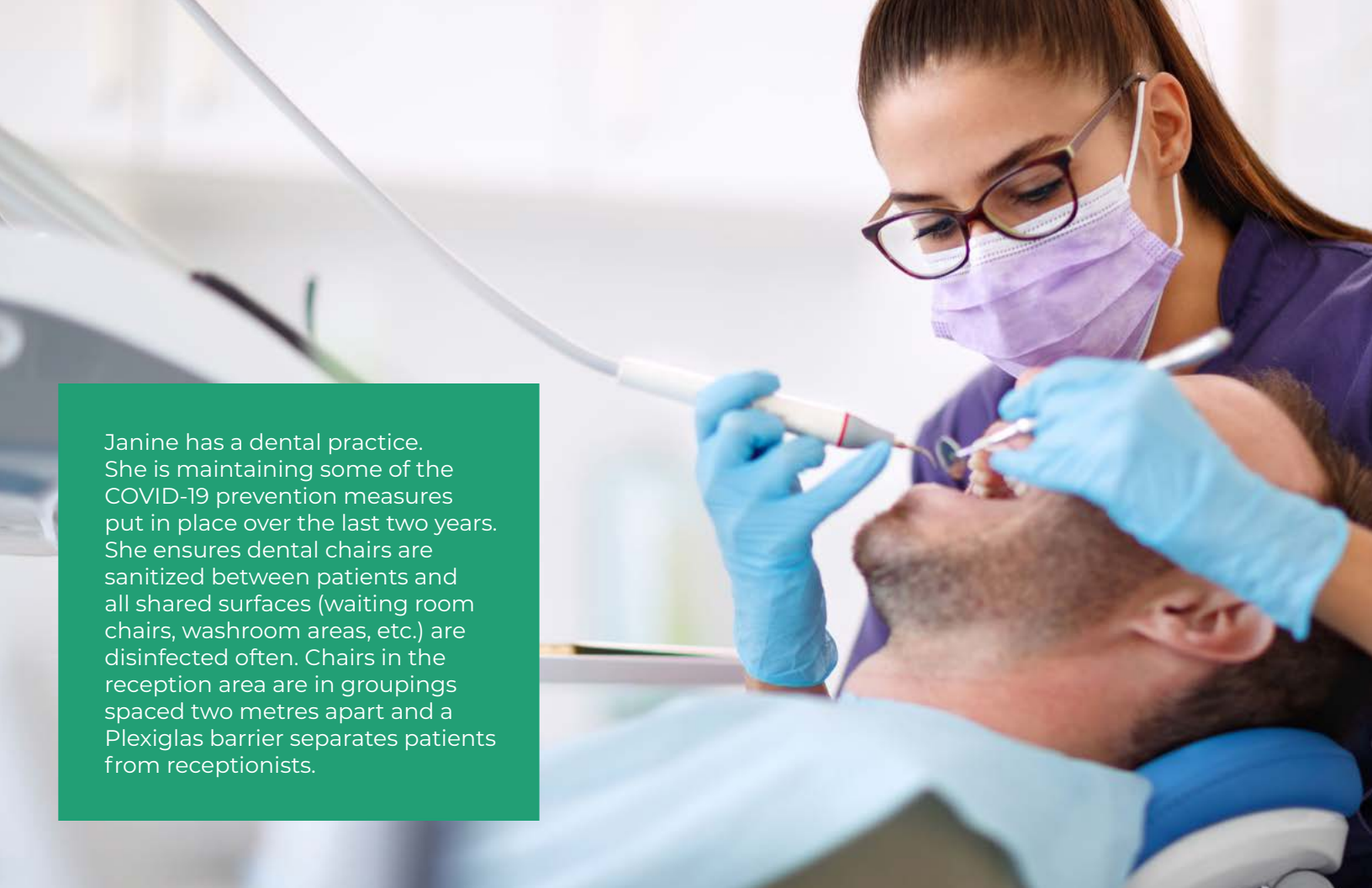


Sign up for WorkSafeNB alerts and advisories.



WorkSafeNB and the **Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety** (CCOHS) each offer a free app for offline access to workplace safety resources. CCOHS also offers a **COVID-19 tool kit** and free access to many COVID-19 related **e-courses**.

* Exception: workplaces that have an existing infection prevention and control plan related to communicable disease.



Janine has a dental practice. She is maintaining some of the COVID-19 prevention measures put in place over the last two years. She ensures dental chairs are sanitized between patients and all shared surfaces (waiting room chairs, washroom areas, etc.) are disinfected often. Chairs in the reception area are in groupings spaced two metres apart and a Plexiglas barrier separates patients from receptionists.



Jeremy is a supervisor at a hotel bar. He ensures employees are fully aware of the communicable disease prevention plan. The hotel's JHSC, supervisors and managers regularly invite staff to share concerns and ask questions on COVID-19 and any other health and safety topic. During the monthly workplace health and safety inspection, members consider the communicable disease prevention plan's practices and measures and check to see that they are being followed.

your RISK

understanding your risk as we ease out of the pandemic

As restrictions loosen, your workplace will continue to have risks related to COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. The risk level at your workplace depends on the various job roles, workplace population, job tasks, staff vaccination rates, access by the public, workspace, and level / extent of ventilation. Review your communicable disease exposure risk by asking yourself and your team these questions:

- ☐ How likely it is 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?

tip!

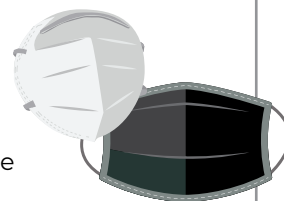
Walk through a risk assessment! Use a **tool developed by Health Canada.**



Vaccination levels can greatly influence your risk level. Be mindful that some aspects of mitigating COVID-19 and other communicable diseases in the workplace may raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek advice from legal or other experts on these issues, as necessary.

Masking after public restrictions ease?

While masking requirements may change by Public Health, your risk assessment may indicate the need to continue use. If this is the case, clarify where and when employees must wear a mask and the type of mask acceptable in the workplace.



* 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.

your communicable disease PREVENTION PLAN

WorkSafeNB strongly recommends that New Brunswick employers develop and follow a communicable disease prevention plan.*

As with all other workplace hazards, you must assess the risk of a communicable disease and develop appropriate measures. Your documented plan can also help you communicate measures easily to staff and visitors.

The plan includes guidance on:

- Risk assessment
- Hierarchy of controls
- Encouraging vaccination for vaccine-preventable diseases
- Cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace
- Ventilation and air circulation
- Communication
- Training
- Monitoring

Where does the plan fit in my health and safety program?

All employers must mitigate the risk of communicable disease transmission. Employers with 20 or more employees should include mitigation measures in their health and safety program. Small employers (fewer than 20 employees) should do this with a policy or procedure if they do not have a health and safety program. When developing the plan, always consult with your JHSC or health and safety representative (or, in smaller workplaces, other workers).

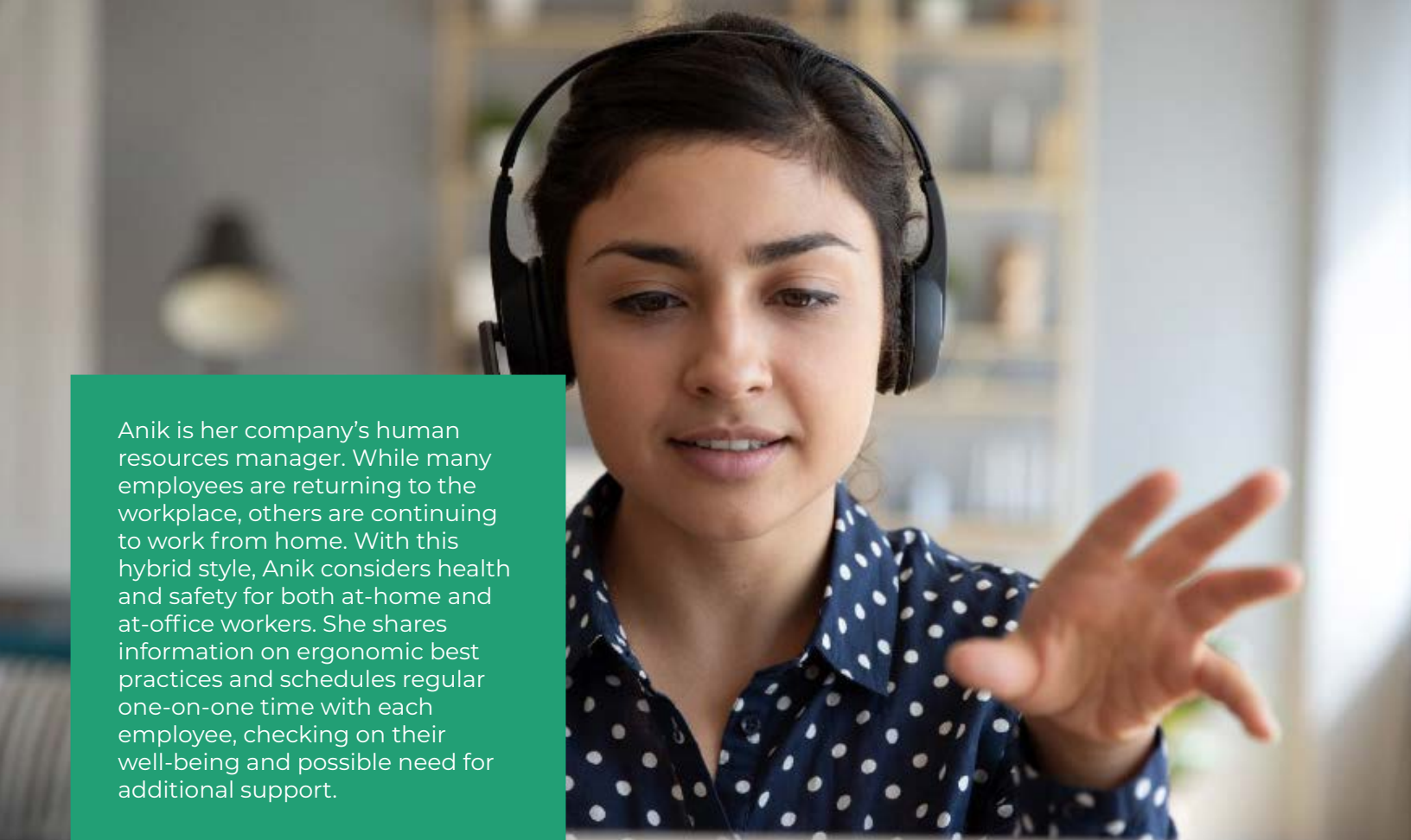


Four-step approach and template

We know you're busy! To help, we've created a **four-step approach and template** in PDF format with fillable fields.



* Exception: workplaces that have an existing infection prevention and control plan related to communicable disease.



Anik is her company's human resources manager. While many employees are returning to the workplace, others are continuing to work from home. With this hybrid style, Anik considers health and safety for both at-home and at-office workers. She shares information on ergonomic best practices and schedules regular one-on-one time with each employee, checking on their well-being and possible need for additional support.



Rob manages a hardware store. He started a pick-up service for his customers a year ago. He'll continue this service as well as keep directional arrows on the floor and a Plexiglas barrier at the contractor and payment desks. He also offers masks to customers and employees, allowing them the choice to wear them.

MENTAL HEALTH support

vital help for your employees as we transition out of the pandemic

Communicable diseases and the stresses that may come with these (increased worry, loss of activities, loneliness, grief, demands of supporting a family member or friend with a disease, changes to procedures in the workplace, etc.) can significantly affect an employee's mental health.

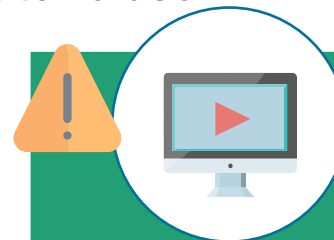
- Regularly update staff on any health and safety changes that affect them. Tell them *why* you are making the changes, and *how* the changes benefit and support them.
- Ensure employees are aware of policies that support the need for time away from the workplace – staying home when sick, attending to personal mental health needs or supporting others.
- Communicate and encourage use of any employee programs that provide confidential counselling. If your organization doesn't offer this, share other helpful resources (211, Chimo Helpline, etc.) See GNB's [Mental Health in a Pandemic](#).



Communicable disease and the right to refuse

Your employees have the right to refuse work if they believe it presents an unsafe situation. This includes situations in which they believe they are insufficiently protected from the risk of communicable disease transmission.

Consider work refusals individually (case by case), assessing all facts. All those involved in a work refusal must follow a process.



Watch a **video** on right to refuse unsafe work and go to the **Three Rights** safety topic in WorkSafeNB's Guide to OHS Legislation app.

COVID-19 and workers' compensation

Claims submitted for a COVID-19 or other communicable disease infection, contracted through a work-related exposure are adjudicated on a case-by-case basis. For a claim to be accepted under the *Workers' Compensation Act*, evidence must show that the infection arose out of and in the course of employment and the risk of contracting the disease through the employment is greater than the risk associated with contracting it through day-to-day living. Learn more: [Policy 21-109 Conditions for Entitlement – Infectious Diseases](#).



Kristin owns a hairstyling studio. She keeps face masks at the studio's entrance and at all work stations. As many of her clients are from a vulnerable population (many are older) and the work requires close interaction with others for extended periods of time, she requires all employees to wear one when providing service.



Luc owns an Italian restaurant. While COVID-19 restrictions are loosening, he has instructed staff to maintain physical distancing between tables of patrons when feasible. He has also kept enhanced cleaning practices. He has ongoing discussions with employees on concerns of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. A communicable disease prevention plan, which was developed in consultation with staff, has been shared and discussed among all employees.

staying safe TOGETHER

continuing to evolve to meet health and safety needs

These past two years have been incredibly difficult. We've seen tremendous impact to workplaces in New Brunswick and across the globe. Throughout the challenges, however, we've seen innovation and creativity. Employers have stepped up to meet the changing requirements for healthy and safe workplaces. Use of online services, home delivery options, work-at-home support, remote meetings and more have shown that we're resilient. As we move out of this pandemic, we encourage you to continue to find innovative approaches and solutions to prevent COVID-19 and other communicable diseases from entering your workplace. Together, we can help keep workers injury-free and disease-free.

Still have questions? We're here to help.

your RESOURCES

WorkSafeNB

worksafenb.ca
prevention@ws-ts.nb.ca
1 800 999-9775

Government of New Brunswick

gnb.ca
helpaide@gnb.ca
1 844 462-8387

Public Health Agency of Canada

canada.ca/en/public-health/

Government of Canada (Coronavirus disease: Awareness resources)

(available in several languages)
canada.ca

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

ccohs.ca
1 800 668-4284



Stay connected to WorkSafeNB!
Visit our **website** regularly, sign up for **E-News** and connect with us on social media channels: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.



Check with industry associations. Many have sector-specific resources.