

# Safe work procedure during the COVID-19 pandemic

(updated June 28, 2021)

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## Department of Biological Sciences

### 1) COVID-19

- a. Self-isolation (14 days) for students/workers who have recently travelled (outside Canada and outside the province, including northwestern Ontario) or have been in contact with suspected/probable/confirmed cases of COVID-19. Check this link for exemptions: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/soe.html>. *Please check the link periodically as policies are constantly changing.*
- b. If a student/worker has a family member/roommate who has recently travelled and is self-isolating in the same accommodation, there are still some risks of contamination even if social distancing, masks and disinfectants are used. Such a situation should be reported to the supervisor and discussed case by case.
- c. Before coming to the University students/workers should review the COVID-19 Screening Questions of the UM COVID site (<https://umanitoba.ca/coronavirus/latest-updates-and-safety#safety-measures-and-information> - Safety measures and information – Complete this questionnaire). This site provides flow charts for students/workers who have been advised to self-isolate/received COVID app alert.
- d. Review the list of symptoms that is posted at the following link <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/index.html> for COVID-19 symptoms.
- e. Stay home if you do not feel well or if you have ANY COVID-19 symptoms (even if they are mild):
  - Any cold or flu-like symptoms (cough, headache, muscle aches, sore throat/hoarse voice or runny nose)
  - Fever or increased temperature/chills
  - Loss of taste or smell
  - Shortness of breath and/or breathing difficulties
  - Vomiting or diarrhea for more than 24 h
  - Fatigue
  - Nausea or loss of appetite
  - Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
  - Skin rash of unknown cause

- f. A worker experiencing any of the above symptoms should go as soon as possible (at least on the same day) to a COVID-19 testing centre to get tested for the infection. The list of locations and hours of service are available at <https://gov.mb.ca/covid19/locations.html>. The nearest testing sites to University of Manitoba are 2735 Pembina Hwy and 604 St. Mary's Rd. (*Please check the link regularly*)
  - g. All supervisors (faculty or staff) are asked to report to Brian Mark (Brian.Mark@umanitoba.ca) any positive cases of COVID-19 affecting their staff. If one of your staff is going for a COVID-19 test, you should notify Brian Mark and cc Jane Waterman. The information will be provided to the leads in the health and safety committee, which include the privacy officer- the information will be held in confidence.
  - h. The University of Manitoba is recommending that its students, faculty and staff subscribe to the COVID-19 Alert App.
  - i. The University of Manitoba has launched a COVID-19 case status page to report the current status of confirmed COVID-19 cases on campus (<https://umanitoba.ca/coronavirus/latest-updates-and-safety#cases-and-status-by-campus>)
  - j. Workers/students are expected to follow provincial health and safety guidelines when not at work. Do not come to work if you are unwell.
  - k. Students/workers should follow the MB Health protocols (including frequent handwashing with soap, coughing or sneezing into elbow, not touching face, cleaning work surface frequently).
  - l. Students/workers who have concerns about returning to their workplace should talk to their supervisor.
- 2) Workers/students who have COVID-19 symptoms at work
- a. Should leave the workplace immediately, wearing a mask.
  - b. Maintain the physical distance from others while leaving the building.
  - c. All symptomatic Manitobans can now be tested for COVID-19. MB Health encourages calling Health Links -Info Santé (204 788 8200 or 1 888 315 9257) and being screened before being tested for COVID-19
  - d. Notify the supervisor and the Head of the Department as soon as possible.
  - e. Workers/students who may have been exposed to suspected/probable/confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the university should be rapidly informed and self-isolate immediately until test results from the initial probable case are obtained to prevent potential spread of the virus.
  - f. The student/worker lab(s) and office should be closed

- g. The lab(s)/office should be sanitized following the institutional sanitization SOP (70% ethanol)  
(<https://www.biorxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.03.10.986711v1.full.pdf>).
  - h. Sanitizing time, location and protocol should be recorded.
- 3) Travel to the university
- a. Avoid using transit system, but if not possible, avoid rush hours (this can be discussed with the supervisor) and wear a mask.
  - b. Vehicle occupancy should be limited to members of the same household
  - c. Unit Heads may exceptionally allow one additional occupant with the following rules:
    - i. maximum distancing should be maintained
    - ii. wearing 3-ply masks
    - iii. maximizing ventilation
- 4) Outdoor mask usage and gatherings on campus
- a. A Mask (3-ply) is required if physical distancing (2 m) is not possible and recommended at all other times
    - i. when outdoors on UM campus
    - ii. while participating in UM-sanctioned activities off-campus
  - b. Outdoor gatherings with up to 10 people are allowed on campus.**
- 5) Minimize the number of workers in a lab/office.
- a. Maintain physical distance (2 m) between workers/students in labs/offices and do not exceed one person per 10 m<sup>2</sup> at all times.
  - b. Three-ply masks are mandatory on UM campus even when physical distancing is possible with the exception of private offices (even if the door is open as long as no one else enters). Check regularly [umanitoba.ca/coronavirus](http://umanitoba.ca/coronavirus) for updates.
  - c. Develop a protocol to disinfect surfaces and shared equipment (including computers). Review the need to wear gloves.
  - d. The hours spent in the lab should be limited based on the type of experiment run. Students/workers could work in shifts (morning/afternoon or start earlier/finish later or on alternate days). A schedule should be posted weekly.
  - e. The Faculty of Science does not recommend the use of plastic dividers in lab/office.
  - f. Work from home when possible
  - g. Student/worker's offices where physical distancing cannot be maintained should remain closed. Students should limit the time spent in their office, respecting social distancing.
- 6) Building entrance and circulation in stairs/hallways (follow instructions posted in each buildings)
- a. Three-ply face masks are required when indoors at all times even when physical distancing is possible.
  - b. Dedicated doors for entrance or exit of the buildings (this will have to be reviewed for each building, some buildings may require more than one entrance

- door). If a building is using a single entry-point to gain access, signs will be posted directing the use of alternate doors only in case of emergency and form a line to keep social distancing while entering the building. Wheelchair users should still be able to access the building and circulate.
- c. Narrow staircases should be used only to exit buildings
  - d. Some narrow hallways (Duff Roblin) could be used in one direction only if crossing the building. If moving only from the lab to a close office or the next lab, check that no one is already in the hallway before stepping out.
  - e. Avoid using tunnels if possible. Animals from the animal holding facility should be transported to Buller/BSB through the tunnel. In this case entrance doors from the tunnels should be accessible.
  - f. Accessibility buttons to open doors: sign to indicate to use elbow (if possible)
- 7) Elevators should be used only when necessary (person with disabilities or when carrying heavy load) and limit the number of occupants to one person wearing a mask. Post signage outside elevator asking people to stand at least 2 m away from the doors and wait for elevator occupant to leave the area before entering. Effective coordination between departments in shared buildings (Duff Roblin and Buller) will be required to implement these steps.
- 8) Water fountains – “Do not use” signs have been posted. Touchless, sensor-activated bottle filler can be used safely (contact Physical Plant before using them if “do not use” sign posted).
- 9) A revised safety protocol has been developed for the use of the lunchrooms.
- a) A revised maximum occupancy has been determined for each building, with 20 min time slots allocated to each lab/group of labs (schedule posted on the door).
  - b) Sign- in and -out sheets will be posted on the door.
  - c) The lunch room will remain available before and after the reserved lunch hours – Sign-in/out required
  - d) Physical distancing (increased to 3 m in lunch spaces) should be maintained; masks should be removed only for eating or drinking.
  - e) One person at a time in the kitchen area.
  - f) Hand sanitizing is required upon entry and exit.
  - g) The use of fridges and microwaves is strongly discouraged
  - h) All surfaces touched should be disinfected
  - i) Eating outside is encouraged (physical distancing maintained)
- 10) Maintain physical distancing in washroom, wear a face mask, have only one person at a time washing their hands. Use signs with specific instructions in washrooms (including use of paper towel to open/close doors if necessary) and place a garbage can outside. In building like Duff Roblin with two doors, one could be used as entry and the other as exit. The university should provide hand sanitizer.

- 11) Use of personnel protective equipment (PPE) and non-medical masks.
  - a. Wearing a mask (3-ply reusable or disposable mask) is required in all indoor common or shared spaces (hallways, lobbies, labs, classroom, study spaces, offices, elevators, washroom, greenhouse). Check regularly the University COVID-19 website ([umanitoba.ca/coronavirus](http://umanitoba.ca/coronavirus)) for update on the topic.
  - b. Masks are not required if someone is alone in their office and physically distanced from others.
  - c. Face shields/N-95 masks and gloves should be used if workers/students cannot maintain the physical distancing (for specific training on a piece of equipment or during a lab procedure).
  - d. Face shields/masks do not replace physical distancing.
  - e. Use individual glove boxes (labeled).
  - f. Given air circulation in buildings and asymptomatic transmission of COVID-19 the need to wear masks in some locations such as small labs, should be reviewed.
  - g. Gloves in use in research labs should never be used when someone exits the lab. Dispose of used gloves before exiting the lab and put on a new pair if required. When transporting hazardous chemicals from one lab to another one use the one-glove rule (that should be posted in your lab).
- 12) Use posters to remind workers/students about hand-hygiene practices. Routinely wash hands at the designated hand-washing station (close to the entrance/exit if possible) and when entering/exiting the lab. Hand sanitizer and soap should be available. Sanitize the work stations daily after completing lab work. The first person into the lab/office will turn on the lights and sanitize the switch. Anyone leaving after a certain time of day will turn off the light and sanitize door handles and light switches on the way out. Door handles should be sanitized regularly by lab/office occupants.
- 13) Hand sanitizer should be available in hallways and building entrances.
- 14) Ask workers/students to maintain a record of their working hours, location, and contact with anyone. Maintain record of non-lab members entering the lab (workers/students using a specific piece of equipment or Physical Plant)
- 15) Review the working alone policy in your lab, and update all emergency contact numbers and phone availability for supervisors and other lab users.
- 16) There should be no visitors going into labs/offices (including other workers/students from the department, Faculty or University) unless that is required for an experiment and discussed in advance with the supervisor. Limit interactions to those required to work with other members of the lab.

17) Hold virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic whenever possible instead of in person meetings

18) Safe work protocols have been developed for:

- a. Greenhouses (Buller and CTC) and growth chamber facilities with restricted access
- b. Animal care facility
- c. Shared facilities with equipment like autoclaves and centrifuges (shared by several departments)
- d. Microscopy facilities
- e. Other shared labs like molecular biology labs or equipment labs
- f. Shared offices/student carrels

*For information on vaccine eligibility see <https://protectmb.ca/eligible-groups/>*

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Immunization cards for fully vaccinated people - applications online at:

<https://immunizationcard.manitoba.ca/>

*Request to Undertake Research in Off-Campus Research Sites or Field Stations*

*Form:* <https://umanitoba.ca/research/sites/research/files/2021-02/request-to-undertake-research-in-off-campus-research-sites-or-field-stations.pdf>

**Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic**

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<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html>

## **Disinfectants**

[https://www.whsc.on.ca/Files/Resources/COVID-19-Resources/WHSC\\_Pandemic\\_EvaluatingDisinfectants2020-en.aspx](https://www.whsc.on.ca/Files/Resources/COVID-19-Resources/WHSC_Pandemic_EvaluatingDisinfectants2020-en.aspx)