

## Small Business: COVID-19 Questions & Answers

If your small business is struggling with all the information regarding COVID-19 out there, here are some things you should know.

Businesses have been given the green light to reopen and are working hard to adapt their operations to the new normal. “One of the challenges,” says WSPS Regional Community Coordinator Lori Shepherd, “is processing the amount of information out there. Business owners have many questions and want reassurance they are doing the right thing.”

What are the top five questions that smaller businesses have been asking? In order, here they are – [see the answers](#) to all the questions:

1. Can I make my customers wear a mask or face covering to protect my workers against COVID-19?
2. Can I make my workers wear masks or face coverings?
3. Should I wear gloves to protect myself against COVID-19? Should I make my workers wear gloves?
4. Does an employer have the right to take the temperature of an employee? Or a customer?
5. An employee is invoking their “right to refuse” unsafe work because of COVID-19. What do I do?

Let’s take a closer look at questions 2 and 4.

### **Can I make my workers wear medical grade masks or face coverings?**

There are important differences between medical grade masks and face coverings.

Medical grade masks are considered personal protective equipment (PPE) because they protect the wearer from exposure; face coverings are not considered PPE because they may protect others but not the wearer.

While face coverings may be an essential part of efforts to reduce COVID-19 transmission, they are not a substitute for physical distancing. (See the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) document, [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#).)

If you haven’t already done so, assess whether PPE needs to be part of your hazard control plan for COVID-19 (elimination, engineering, administrative, and PPE only as a last resort). Workers must use PPE required by their employer.

### **Does an employer have the right to take an employee’s temperature? Or a customer’s temperature?**

Seek legal counsel before screening your employees and customers.

Depending on the nature of your business, it may be reasonable to conduct health screening measures, including temperature checks at home and onsite, to help prevent the spread of

COVID-19 and reduce the potential risk of exposure. However, before imposing these measures look into possible human rights, privacy and workplace health and safety considerations.

It's important for anyone conducting the screening to understand what a normal temperature range is and what constitutes a fever, as well as the limitations of temperature checks as an effective screening tool. For example, workers with no symptoms of COVID-19 may not show elevated temperatures.

*This article was prepared by Workplace Safety & Prevention Services (WSPS), helping Ontario businesses improve health and safety for over 100 years. For more COVID-19 related information, visit our COVID-19 hub <https://covid19.wsps.ca/> or contact WSPS at [customercare@wsps.ca](mailto:customercare@wsps.ca).*