



Ministry of
Education
and Culture



Finnish Institute for
Health and Welfare

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General instructions for universities, universities of applied sciences and providers of general upper secondary education, vocational education and training, liberal education and basic adult education for preventing infection as provisions restricting contact teaching are gradually dismantled

Legal bases and competences

In accordance with section 8 of the Communicable Diseases Act (1227/2016), the Regional State Administrative Agencies coordinate and supervise the prevention of infections in their territory. The joint municipal authorities for hospital districts guide and support municipalities as well as healthcare and social welfare in the prevention of communicable diseases, work regionally to develop the diagnostics and treatment of communicable diseases, and investigate epidemics together with municipalities. The Regional State Administrative Agencies and the joint municipal authorities for hospital districts within each Agency's operating area collaborate in the prevention of communicable diseases. The Regional State Administrative Agencies make the administrative decisions laid down in this Act by making use of the expertise of the joint municipal authority of the hospital district, the specific catchment area, and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. Under section 9 of the Communicable Diseases Act (1227/2016), municipalities are responsible for organising the work to combat of communicable diseases referred to in this Act within their area as part of public health work, as laid down in the Primary Health Care Act (66/1972), in the Health Care Act and in this Act. In this Act, the actions to combat communicable diseases encompass the prevention, early detection and monitoring of communicable diseases, measures needed to investigate or prevent an epidemic, and the examination, treatment and medical rehabilitation of persons who have a communicable disease or are suspected of having one, as well as the prevention of treatment-related infections.

Purpose of the instructions

On 6 May 2020, the Government issued a Government Resolution on a plan for a hybrid strategy to manage the COVID-19 crisis. Based on the Resolution, as of 14 May 2020, using the facilities of general upper secondary schools, vocational schools, universities of applied sciences, universities, liberal education institutes and adult basic education institutes for teaching purposes will be managed in accordance with the measures laid down in the Communicable Diseases Act. However, the Government recommends that universities, universities of applied sciences, general upper secondary schools, vocational education and training institutes, liberal education and basic adult education institutes continue distance teaching until the end of term. Education providers can decide for themselves the extent to which they will arrange contact teaching as necessary. In the summer, contact teaching will be arranged in line with the guidelines on hygiene and physical distancing.

The purpose of these instructions is to support universities and universities of applied sciences as well as providers of general upper secondary education, vocational education and training, liberal education and basic adult education to carry out teaching and other activities organised in the premises of educational institutions safely during the COVID-19 epidemic. By following the instructions, the risk of infection can be reduced in educational institutions.

Do not take part in education and other activities organised in educational institutions if you have symptoms of illness

Coronavirus causes a respiratory infection. The symptoms may include a cough, sore throat, fever, shortness of breath (dyspnoea), muscle pain (myalgia), abdominal symptoms and headache (<https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/coronavirus-covid-19>). If a student or teacher has any symptoms of illness, they must not participate in contact teaching or other activities organised on the premises of an educational institution where other people are present at the same time. Others working in or visiting the premises of the educational institution must also not enter the premises of the educational institution if they have any symptoms of illness. Anyone who becomes ill during the day must leave the educational institution immediately or move to a separate space. Those with symptoms must follow the instructions of local health authorities and contact primary or occupational health care, and, in accordance with the instructions received from them, apply for a coronavirus test.

If a student living in the dormitory of an educational institution becomes ill, the educational institution must contact the unit responsible for communicable diseases in the municipality of the educational institution in order to evaluate the situation and to assess what measures are necessary.

Risk groups

During the epidemic, those belonging to a risk group should avoid close contacts. For this reason, it is not recommended that they take part in contact teaching.

Groups at risk of serious illness from COVID-19: <https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/coronavirus-covid-19/risk-groups-for-coronavirus-disease>

For those working in educational institutions, the measures are based on a risk assessment carried out by the employer. Occupational healthcare supports the employer in the risk assessment.

Avoid unnecessary physical contact

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through droplets (<https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/coronavirus-covid-19>). Situations in which people are in direct contact with one another should be avoided in educational institutions. If necessary, the education provider and the unit responsible for communicable diseases in the municipality where the educational institution is located can provide further guidance on practical measures.

- In principle, the general restrictions on gatherings do not apply to teaching and other statutory activities of educational institutions. However, big events, such as graduation ceremonies covering the entire educational institution, should not be organised.
- The recommendations of the Government on the prevailing restrictions on gatherings and the decisions of the Regional State Administrative Agencies on public events in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act must be complied with at public events organised by educational institutions.
- If teaching is organised for a large number of participants (such as large lectures), remote connections should be used.
- The educational institutions are entitled to restrict the presence of those who are not students or staff in their educational institution.
- Separate instructions will be issued on the organisation of university entrance examinations
- To avoid close contacts, spaces should be arranged in such a way that it is possible to maintain a safe distance between people; the distance between each person should be 1 to 2 metres.
- The use of student canteens and other eating areas can be used in turns. It must be possible to avoid close contact during meals and to keep a safe distance of 1 to 2 metres between diners. Ensure proper hygiene when preparing and distributing food as well as during meals.

- Students in the dormitories of educational institutions can live in shared rooms if it involves long-term accommodation. In the case of short-term accommodation, the decisions on accommodation policy are made locally in consultation with the unit responsible for communicable diseases, if necessary. The educational institutions must keep records of each person who has used their accommodation on a room-by-room basis so that infections can be traced later, if necessary.

Instructions by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health for employees (in Finnish):
<https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/koronavirus/ohje-tyontekijalle>

Good hand hygiene and cough hygiene prevents infections

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through droplets <https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/coronavirus-covid-19>). Proper cough and hand hygiene practices prevent infections. To raise awareness, it is recommended that information material on the right practices be distributed to those working and studying at educational institutions.

- When in an educational institution, wash your hands before meals, whenever you come in after you have been out, after sneezing or coughing, or if your hands are visibly dirty. Use disposable paper towels to dry your hands.
- If you cannot wash your hands, use an alcohol-based sanitizer. Alcohol-based sanitizers must be readily available.
- When sneezing or coughing, place a disposable handkerchief to cover your mouth and dispose of it immediately after use. If you do not have a handkerchief, cover your mouth with your upper arm near your inner elbow. Then wash your hands.
- There are currently no general recommendations on the use of masks, but you can use one if you wish, taking into account the instructions for its use.

<https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://thl.fi/fi/web/infektiaudit-ja-rokotukset/ajankohtaista/ajankohtaista-koronaviruksesta-covid-19/ohjeita-kansalaisille-koronaviruksesta/kankaisten-kasvomaskien-kaytto-koronaviruspandemian-aikana> (in Finnish)

<https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/koronavirus/tietoa-itse-tehdyista-kasvomaskeista> (in Finnish)

Cleaning

COVID-19 is primarily transmitted as a droplet and contact infection when a person coughs or sneezes. It is possible that the virus might also be transmitted through physical contact. Coronaviruses do not survive for long periods in the air or on surfaces of varying temperatures.

Use a slightly alkaline all-purpose cleaner in cleaning. You can use disinfectant to step up cleaning in sanitary facilities. Comply with the cleaning instructions of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.

- Wipe contact surfaces such as door handles, armrests, desks and tables, light switches and taps at least once a day, preferably twice a day.
- Avoid using shared work or study equipment and make sure to always clean them after use between users.

<https://hyvatyo.ttl.fi/koronavirus/ohje-siivoukseen> (in Finnish)

If a coronavirus infection is diagnosed in an educational institution

The physician responsible for communicable diseases in the municipality or hospital district is in charge of investigating transmission chains. If a student or a person working in an educational institution is diagnosed with COVID-19, action will be taken to examine whether an exposure has occurred. Those exposed will be tracked down and quarantined for 14 days in accordance with the procedures laid down in Communicable Diseases Act. The person infected with coronavirus must stay away from the educational institution for at least 14 days from the onset of symptoms.

If COVID-19 is diagnosed in a dormitory of an educational institution, the situation will be addressed in cooperation with the unit responsible for communicable diseases in the municipality where the institution is located.