



21 September 2020

## Guidelines on the prevention of coronavirus infections at public events and gatherings and in the use of public spaces

### Edited on 4 November 2020:

- Specifications related to the section on quarantine.

### Edited on 11 February 2021:

- The guidelines were streamlined with other guidelines issued by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

### Edited on 22 February 2021:

- The guidelines were edited to reflect the situation under the temporary amendment to the Communicable Diseases Act (147/2021).

### Purpose of the guidelines

- The purpose of these guidelines is to support the organisation of public events and gatherings indoors and in regionally restricted outdoor spaces safely and to give guidance on the safe use of public spaces during the COVID-19 epidemic. By complying with the guidelines, infections can be prevented and the number of people exposed to the virus can be reduced.
- To prevent COVID-19 infections, those responsible for managing premises intended for use by customers and other participants shall, directly on the basis of section 58c of the Communicable Diseases Act, implement the measures referred to in the section. These guidelines directly supplement the obligations arising from the Communicable Diseases Act and their compliance may also be imposed by a separate decision in accordance with the Act.
- Section 58 of the Communicable Diseases Act lays down the powers of the regional state administrative agencies and the municipalities to impose restrictions by decision on the organisation of public events and gatherings. Under section 58d of the Communicable Diseases Act, the regional state administrative agencies or the municipal body responsible for controlling communicable diseases may, under certain conditions, also order the use of premises other than those used for public events to be organised in such a way that people can avoid close contact with one another in practice. Certain high-risk facilities specified in the Act may also be temporarily closed under section 58g of the Communicable Diseases Act.

The guidelines describe the general conditions for preventing COVID-19 infections and limiting the number of people exposed to the infection. They can issue more detailed and situation-, activity- or event-specific recommendations that take account of the decisions made under the Communicable Diseases Act. It is possible for operators to fulfil their obligations by limiting the number of clients, by adjusting seating or spaces or by any other means that takes into account the specific characteristics of each operator's activities. The principles drawn up by the working group of the Ministry of Education and Culture for organising events in a responsible way can be used to this end.

## Collaboration with authorities at the local level

- **Make sure to take into account the regulations issued by the municipality and the Regional Administrative Agency on the number of people allowed at public events and restrictions on the use of premises.**
- Contact the local health authorities to ensure that health security is in place for the event. Under the Communicable Diseases Act, local and regional authorities responsible for communicable diseases may assist in drawing up guidelines for specific situations.
- Separate provisions are issued on the obligations that organisers holding events in the capacity of an employer have to protect employees. For those working in public premises, the measures are based on a risk assessment made by the employer. Occupational healthcare supports employers in the risk assessment.

## Statutory obligations

Under section 58c of the Communicable Diseases Act, those responsible for managing premises intended for use by customers and other participants have the following obligations:

- customers and participants must be given the opportunity to clean their hands;
- customers and participants must be given instructions on how to keep adequate distance, how to clean their hands and other similar practices to prevent the spread of infections;
- more intensive cleaning of premises and surfaces must be ensured in addition to provisions issued elsewhere on cleanliness related to the activities in question;
- customers and participants should use the premises in such a way that they are spaced as far apart as possible, taking into account the specific characteristics of the activity in question, and any customer seating is arranged sufficiently far apart from each other.

## Hygiene guidelines and recommendations

- It is important to make sure that those with symptoms of illness do not attend any public events or public gatherings or spend time in public spaces. When communicating about a public event, it is important to emphasise that people should not have any symptoms of illness. Attention must be paid to making it easy to cancel pre-booked tickets due to illness.
- Some of those who have contracted COVID-19 show very weak symptoms, and are sometimes even totally asymptomatic. In addition, those who are infected are contagious roughly two days before the onset of symptoms. For this reason, it is important that all participants comply with good hygiene practices and ensure that they maintain safe distancing.
- In line with the recommendations of the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare on the use of masks, event organisers should recommend the use of masks. Regional recommendations should also be taken into account in this context.
- Proper practices for coughing and nose blowing prevent infections. To raise awareness, it is recommended that information material on the right practices be distributed to both staff members and participants at events as part of the statutory instructions.
- Proper hand hygiene is also necessary in preventing infections. Make sure that there is a sufficient supply of hand sanitisers and places to wash hands at each event. Make sure that the WCs work properly and that there is a good supply of soap and paper towels.
- The coronavirus is mainly transmitted by respiratory droplets. 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.

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare [Symptoms and treatment – coronavirus](#).

## Keep at a safe distance

- By keeping a safe distance between people, it is possible to prevent infections effectively. Public events should be organised in such a way that it is possible for people to keep at a safe distance from one another throughout the public event. The maximum number of people must be limited so that it is possible to keep a distance of at least 2 metres between people or groups of people. A group refers to people living in the same household or ones who are otherwise continuously or regularly in contact, for example.
- In situations where queues may arise, people should be reminded of and advised on how to maintain safe distancing. Safe distancing can be ensured, for example, by having an adequate number of staff members to guide people, by introducing distancing signs and by preventing long queues from forming by making arrangements for how and when participants arrive and assemble. The use of

cordoning and ropes, for example, can help guide the public, and guards and security stewards can guide people to move in such a way as to avoid congestion.

- There is a higher risk of contamination by droplets in situations such as joint singing events and group sports activities, so it is particularly important to stress the use of masks and safe distancing in such situations. The risk of infection through droplets increases during strenuous use of voice when cheering, for example.

## Cleaning

- The coronavirus is mainly transmitted by respiratory droplets. It is possible that the virus might also be transmitted through physical contact. However, coronaviruses do not stay on surfaces for long periods of time.
- Slightly alkaline all-purpose cleaners should be used when cleaning. Disinfectant can be used to step up cleaning in sanitary facilities. Comply with the cleaning instructions of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.
- When cleaning, wipe contact surfaces such as door handles, armrests, worktops and tables, light switches and taps at least once a day, preferably twice a day. In places where there are high numbers of visitors, cleaning is recommended every two to four hours. Avoid using shared work or study equipment, and they should always be cleaned after each user.

Finnish Institute of Occupational Health [Cleaning guidelines](#)

## COVID-19 infection at a public event or gathering

- The physician responsible for communicable diseases in the municipality or hospital district is in charge of investigating transmission chains. If someone who has attended a public event or gathering is diagnosed with COVID-19, action is taken to identify whether others have been exposed to it, and, under the Communicable Diseases Act, those exposed are traced and quarantined. To make it easier to trace the infection, the organisers of events and gatherings should, whenever possible and within the scope of other legislation, keep a record of those who took part in the events and gatherings. By limiting the number of people at public events and public gatherings and restricting people from different groups mingling, the number of people exposed can be reduced if a COVID-19 infection is detected among a group of people.

## Risk groups

- During the epidemic, it is recommended that those who belong to the risk groups avoid close contacts. For this reason, taking part in public events, general gatherings or activities organised in public spaces are not recommended for people belonging to a risk group. If participation is essential, the recommendations on safe distancing and hygiene mentioned in these guidelines must be observed.

Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: [Risk groups for severe coronavirus disease](#)

## **Considerations related to children and young people taking part in camping activities**

- Only those with no symptoms of illness can participate in the camps.
- It is recommended that the camps work in restricted groups of up to 10 persons at most, so that they sleep, eat and work together in such a way that they do not come into contact with others who might be at the camping centre at the same time. This limits the number of close contacts at the camp and makes it easier to trace anyone who might have become exposed if a COVID-19 infection is diagnosed at the camp.
- General provisions on good hand hygiene and respiratory and cough hygiene and cleaning practices should be followed.
- Unnecessary physical contact should be avoided (e.g. handshake, hugging).
- If a camper is diagnosed with symptoms indicative of COVID-19 at the camp, he or she must be placed in a separate area to wait until it is possible to leave the camp. Then he or she must take a COVID-19 test as soon as possible. If a coronavirus infection is diagnosed, those exposed to it must be traced and quarantined. In such cases, the organiser of the camp must contact the local unit responsible for communicable diseases to get further instructions.

## **Other accountability**

Other private events that are not part of an actual event may be organised in connection with public events. Although the organiser of the event is not responsible for private events of this kind, it should nevertheless be emphasised in the communications related to the event that the risk of infection also exists at private gatherings and events. Local recommendations should be followed.