



31 May 2021

These guidelines is replaced by the recommendation of 1.10.2021
Recommendations on the prevention of coronavirus infections at public
events and gatherings and in the use of certain spaces

Guidelines for preventing coronavirus infections at public events and gatherings and in the use of certain spaces

Purpose of the guidelines

These guidelines describe the application of the provisions of the Communicable Diseases Act to public events and gatherings and the use of spaces, and provide recommendations for their application in practice.

The purpose of these guidelines is to support the organisation of public events, gatherings and meetings, and to support the safe use of spaces during the coronavirus epi-demic. By complying with these guidelines, infections can be prevented and the number of people exposed to the virus can be reduced.

Events and activities can also be organised following [the principles prepared by the working group of the Ministry of Education and Culture for organising events responsibly](#). Furthermore, operators may prepare their own situation-, activity- or event-specific recommendations within the scope of the provisions of the Communicable Diseases Act.

Collaboration with authorities at the local level

Note any decisions of the municipality or the Regional State Administrative Agency re-garding the maximum number of participants in public events and the prerequisites for events and the use of spaces.

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. In this context, it would be useful to identify the epidemiological situation in the area from where participants arrive at the event.

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.

Maintaining safe distances

Statutory obligations and their fulfilment

An operator responsible for the management of indoor areas and locally and functionally limited outdoor areas open to the public or intended for a limited group of customers or participants must provide customers and participants with instructions on how to maintain safe distances. The stay of customers and participants must be arranged to ensure safe distances are maintained, insofar as this is possible considering the special characteristics of the activity, and any customer places must be located at a sufficient distance from each other.

By maintaining a safe distance between people, it is possible to prevent infections effectively. The risk of an infection is easily higher than normal when using a loud voice when singing or shouting, for example, and in indoor exercise activities. The use of a face mask and the avoidance of close contact are therefore emphasised in these and similar situations. In addition, effective ventilation should be arranged indoors.

Maintaining a sufficient distance does not require that a safe distance of a specific number of metres be maintained at all times. However, it is easier to maintain a sufficient distance if a specific place can be designated for each participant beforehand. The maintenance of safe distances can also be ensured by means of guiding personnel and distance signs, and by preventing the formation of long queues by setting up arrangements for the arrival and grouping of participants. Participants may also be guided to move around to ensure congestion is avoided by using tapes or ropes and security stewards. Furthermore, opening hours and the rhythm of activities can be rearranged to ensure safe distances between customers and groups.

Recommended further measures and their implementation

Municipalities can issue recommendations according to which the operator responsible for activities should implement concrete functional changes in addition to statutory obligations to ensure that customers and participants can maintain safe distances of at least one metre or more, for example, if permitted by the facilities. In addition, effective ventilation should be arranged indoors.

[Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: Coronavirus and safety of indoor air](#)

These changes can be implemented, as selected by the operator, by directly limiting the number of customers or through structural changes in activities, including physical structures (plexiglass or similar), measures to guide and supervise the stay and moving around of customers, designated standing or seating places for customers and various pre-booking systems, to ensure sufficient distances through a time-based number of customers. For example, a separate standing or seating place can be designated for each customer and participant, placed at a sufficient distance from other customers

and participants, both indoors and outdoors. Customers may also be guided to their place.

Obligations imposed through administrative decisions

Municipalities and the Regional State Administrative Agency can decide to prevent public events and meetings in their area pursuant to section 58 of the Communicable Diseases Act. However, the decision may permit the organisation of the event under certain conditions. These conditions may concern the maximum number of participants or the organisation of the event to ensure participants and groups can avoid any close contact.

If a municipality or the Regional State Administrative Agency has issued the decision laid down in section 58 d of the Communicable Diseases Act, the use of spaces intended for the staying of customers or participants must be arranged so that customers, participants and groups can actually avoid close contact with each other. Such a decision can be issued for a maximum of one month at a time. In this case, a written plan must be prepared for the implementation of obligations and restrictions, and it must be kept visible in the space.

Close contact means that people stay in a single indoor area at a distance of less than two metres from one another for more than 15 minutes, or have physical contact with each other.

If activities cannot be organised in this way, the space cannot be used for customers and participants.

In this case, the organiser of the activity must ensure and supervise that customers and participants can actually be separate from other customers and groups. In practice, organising the stay of customers and participants in accordance with the requirements may require specific technical arrangements such as partitions, plexiglass shields or other similar solutions that separate people from each other, limiting the use of customer places or limiting the access or number of customers if close contact cannot otherwise be avoided. The obligation may also be fulfilled by arranging the phased arrival or stay of customers in the area. The organiser of the activity can implement the measures in a way that is suitable for the characteristics of the customer facilities, such as the size, any fixed structures, the location of customer places and the regular activities of customers in the space.

Face masks

Currently, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) recommends the use of face masks throughout the country. Further recommendations on the use of masks in different situations depend on the phase of the coronavirus epidemic and may vary by region ([link to THL's website](#)).

It should be noted that a face mask should not be used if it unreasonably hinders breathing or if other health-related reasons prevent its use. As a rule, the face mask recommendation applies to people of at least 12 years of age.

A private service provider or event organiser may require customers to use a face mask to reduce the risk of an infection. However, requirements related to non-discrimination must be addressed regarding the use of face masks. With regard to communication, it should be noted that not everyone can use a face mask for health-related reasons.

Hygiene

Statutory obligations

An operator responsible for the management of indoor areas and locally and functionally limited outdoor areas open to the public or intended for a limited group of customers or participants must ensure that customers and participants can clean their hands.

Customers and participants must be provided with instructions on how to clean their hands and on other similar practices that prevent the spread of infections.

Practical examples

Proper practices for coughing and nose-blowing prevent infections. It is recommended that communication material that provides guidance on appropriate practices be distributed to employees and visitors as part of statutory instructions to increase awareness.

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.

Cleaning

Statutory obligations

An operator responsible for the management of indoor areas and locally and functionally limited outdoor areas open to the public or intended for a limited group of customers or participants must ensure that facilities and surfaces are cleaned more frequently than normal in addition to other provisions on cleaning in the activities in question.

Practical examples

It is possible that coronavirus infections also spread through 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. The cleaning instructions issued by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health must be followed: [Cleaning instructions \(in Finnish\)](#).

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. More frequent cleaning every two to four hours, for example, is recommended in environments with a large number of visitors. Avoid using shared work or study equipment, and they should always be cleaned after each user.

Closing facilities

Statutory obligations

If a municipality or the Regional State Administrative Agency has issued the decision laid down in section 58 g of the Communicable Diseases Act, customer, participant and waiting areas that are open to the public, or intended for a limited group of customers or participants, must be closed from customers and participants. Such a decision can be issued for at a maximum of two weeks at a time.

The decision is obligatory when engaging in exercise, sporting, leisure or recreational activities in the following facilities:

- 1) indoor facilities used for team sports, group exercise, contact sports and other similar sports or exercise, as well as gyms and other similar indoor exercise facilities;
- 2) public saunas and pool areas of public pools, outdoor swimming pools and spas, as well as changing rooms directly in their conjunction;
- 3) dance facilities and facilities used for choirs, amateur theatre and other similar amateur group activities;
- 4) amusement and theme parks, carnivals and indoor areas at zoos;
- 5) indoor activity parks and playgrounds;
- 6) public areas at shopping centres, apart from commercial facilities and facilities intended for the provision of services, as well as routes used to access them.

Coronavirus infections at public events or gatherings

If a participant in a public event has a coronavirus infection, the exposure of other participants to the infection must be identified. The physician responsible for communicable diseases in the municipality or hospital district is in charge of investigating transmission chains. Any exposed participants must be traced and placed into quarantine in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act.

Contact tracing will be easier if the event organiser or the operator responsible for the activities arranged in the facilities has information about the people who participated in the activities. The Data Protection Ombudsman has provided instructions on the factors that need to be considered when collecting customers' contact information for contact tracing. [Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman: Frequently asked questions on data protection and the coronavirus](#)

The number of exposed participants can be reduced by limiting the number of participants in public events and gatherings, and by dividing the participants into different sections in situations where a coronavirus infection is later identified among the participants.

Other accountability

Decisions of the Regional State Administrative Agencies on restrictions on gatherings do not apply to private events. Private events include all events that are not open to the public, such as graduations, weddings, funerals, infant baptisms, birthday parties and private get-togethers.

However, it is recommended that general guidelines on hygiene, safe distances and other arrangements that prevent coronavirus infections are also followed at such events. Municipalities and hospital districts can also issue regional recommendations for organising private events, including recommendations for limiting the number of participants to reduce contact. According to experience obtained during the pandemic, private events include an increased risk of infection due to the long-term nature of contact.

However, if a private event is held at a restaurant, cafeteria or other catering facility, valid restrictions and obligations regarding restaurant operations must be taken into account.

Movement between areas at different levels of the epidemic should be avoided in accordance with regional recommendations.

It is recommended that people belonging to risk groups take the coronavirus vaccine unless there is a reason not to. The risk of a fully vaccinated person (usually two doses of the coronavirus vaccine) contracting a serious coronavirus infection is very low. However, it is also recommended that fully vaccinated people follow the coronavirus prevention instructions described in these guidelines at public events and gatherings and in public spaces during the epidemic.

LINKS

Regional information

[Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: The COVID-19 epidemic: regional situation, recommendations and restrictions](#)

[Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare: The COVID-19 epidemic: regional situation, recommendations and restrictions](#)

[Valid restrictions and restrictions to enter into force \(Regional State Administrative Agencies\)](#)

[Regional COVID-19 situation and restrictions on the hospital district websites \(Finnish Government\)](#)