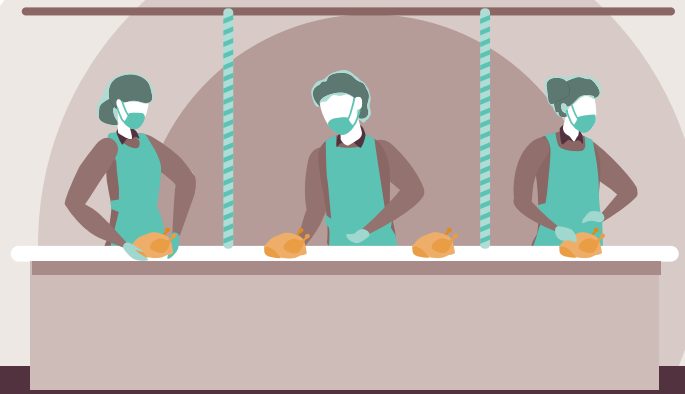


# PROTECTING WORKERS

from COVID-19



## MEAT & POULTRY PROCESSING WORKERS

### What hazards do meat & poultry processing workers face in this pandemic?

The main hazards in food processing are still there: noise, wet and humid spaces, line speeds, repetitive work, and more. The pandemic adds the coronavirus along with the increased use of common or new cleaning and disinfecting chemicals – sometimes incorrectly and without attention to their hazards. Workers need protection from existing hazards and special protection from the virus.

### How should meat & poultry processing workers be protected during the pandemic?

Employers are required by law to provide healthy and safe workplaces. This includes finding ways to prevent exposure to COVID-19. All workplaces should have a pandemic plan developed with the workplace health and safety committee which includes both workers and employers.

#### 1. Increase physical distance between workers

The distance between workers should be 2 metres/6.5 feet throughout the plant, including on production lines. This can be achieved by:

- ✓ visual cues about 2 metre distances (e.g., tape, paint on the floor) wherever people are present (e.g., locker rooms, hallways, screening areas, offices, PPE and tool distribution lines, production lines)
- ✓ single-file, one-way movement in and out of the facility, locker rooms, production areas, etc.,
- ✓ staggered times for shift changes or breaks to limit the number of people in hallways
- ✓ more clock in/out spots, spaced apart and preferably touch-free
- ✓ not having people working opposite one another
- ✓ extra space in break and meeting areas, such as spaced-apart seats
- ✓ using touchless devices to sign in, accept deliveries, etc.
- ✓ avoiding car pools or buses to work

If people must share rides to work, everyone in the vehicle should wear a face covering, sit away from others, and wash their hands right before getting into the vehicle and right after getting out.

**Keep people who work together in small groups throughout the work day. Small groups of workers can arrive at the same time and take breaks together to limit their contact with others.**

### HOW COVID-19 IS SPREAD



The virus gets into the air when people with it sneeze, cough, shout, sing, and/or talk loudly. Sometimes it just takes sick people breathing in our direction. The longer and closer we are to someone infected with the virus, the greater the possibility we will get it.

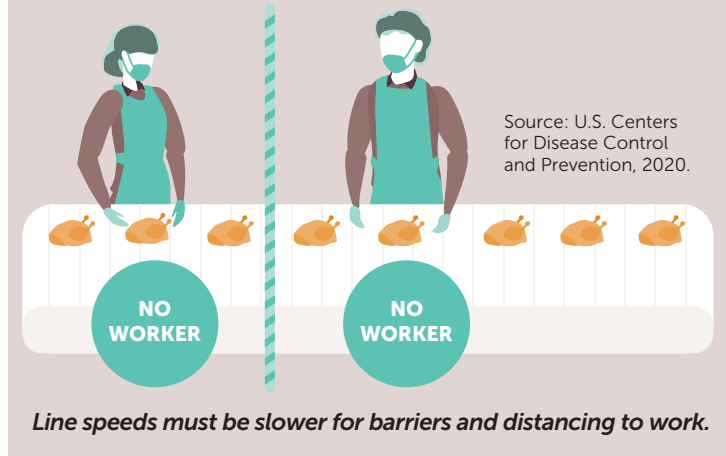
There are two main ways to pick-up the virus. The most common is inhaling infected particles in the air. The other is touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. The virus can stay in the air and on surfaces from a few hours to several days, depending on air movements and the material.

## 2. Install Physical Barriers

Physical barriers separate people inside and outside the plant. They go hand-in-hand with physical distancing. Barriers should be used:

- ✓ on production lines (e.g., plexiglass)
- ✓ in cafeterias and break rooms (between or on tables), extending plexiglass partitions a bit past the edge to prevent workers leaning back into the space of the person next to them
- ✓ in hallways, to guide traffic (e.g., plastic sheets, plexiglass).

Partitions may need to be adjusted to work with the processing line or other manufacturing equipment.



## 3. Have the right personal protective equipment (PPE)



Personal protective equipment (PPE) is essential in a pandemic and must be supplied by the employer. It must be right for the job and be fitted to the worker. Anyone who is cleaning and sanitizing needs extra PPE, depending on the product(s) used, such as nitrile gloves to protect hands.



A **universal mask policy** is necessary in a processing plant to ensure everyone wears a **surgical/procedure mask**. It must cover the nose, mouth and chin. Masks must be provided as soon as possible at screening or entering the plant, **every day**. Training is required on how to put them on and take them off properly. Soiled masks must be replaced immediately.



Some plants provide N95 respirators for those in crowded production spaces and people doing the screening. N95 respirators must be fitted to each person and replaced when

contaminated or dirty. They can be difficult to wear for a whole shift because of the physical work and other gear workers use. Those wearing them need extra breaks, especially in hot spaces.

**If there's a problem with any PPE or other protections, report it immediately to a supervisor.**

## 4. Improve ventilation

The coronavirus spreads through infected particles in the air, which makes clean air very important for the health and safety of plant workers.

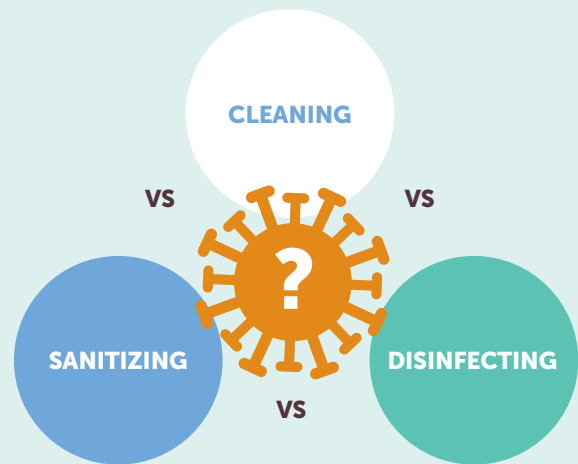
Air should move smoothly in one direction; as strong air flow from fans can lift virus particles back into the air. Fans should blow clean air directly towards a worker's breathing zone, without blowing it onto another worker.

Air should be removed from all areas and be replaced with totally fresh air regularly. If air is re-circulated, it must go through high efficiency (HEPA) filters. Intakes and returns need to be cleaned daily and filters changed regularly.

## 5. Clean more and sanitize and disinfect as needed – *with safer products*

**Cleaning is important to reduce spread of the virus.** When disinfecting and sanitizing are needed, employers should supply less toxic or non-toxic products or methods.

### CLEANING, SANITIZING & DISINFECTING



### What are the differences?

**CLEANING:** Physically removes dirt and germs on surfaces or objects using soap/detergent, water and friction. **This must be done before sanitizing and disinfecting.**

**SANITIZING\*:** Reduces germs on surfaces to levels considered safe for public health.

**DISINFECTING\*:** Destroys almost all germs when used on a surface as label directs. Some affect only viruses, others only bacteria, and some get rid of both.

\*Products must be registered with Health Canada or the US EPA and should be approved to kill coronavirus.

**For more information read "Safer Cleaning Practices for the Workplace" at [mflohc.mb.ca/covid-19](http://mflohc.mb.ca/covid-19)**

## 6. Frequent hand washing



Washing hands with soap and water is essential to avoid the virus. Workers need easy access to bathrooms or wash stations with running water, enough supplies of soap and paper towels, and time to wash their hands. When that's not possible, hand sanitizers (60-80% ethanol/ethyl alcohol or 60-75% isopropyl alcohol/isopropanol) must be available. Touchless dispensers are best.

### Workers need to be able to wash/sanitize their hands:

- ✓ when they come to work
- ✓ before and after eating or taking breaks
- ✓ before putting on and after taking off PPE (especially respirators, masks, or gloves)
- ✓ before leaving work.

**Hand sanitizer and gloves do not replace good handwashing practices.**

## 7. Removing work clothes for cleaning

### When taking off work clothes:

- ✓ handle as little as possible, with no shaking
- ✓ put wet items into a leak-proof container and put them in the designated drop zone
- ✓ if necessary (because of known or suspected virus), wear appropriate PPE, including gloves, gowns, face covering.

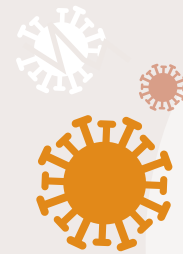
## 8. Keep sick people out of the workplace

### Sick people should not be in the plant. Policies need to ensure:

- ✓ everyone entering the plant is screened (e.g., standard symptom questions) and no one enters the plant if they have symptoms, or are sick
- ✓ there are no incentives or pressures to come to work (e.g., bonus pay, extra food at shift end, bingos)
- ✓ workers who are more likely to get sick, or are pregnant, are allowed to stay home without losing pay or seniority
- ✓ there is no retaliation or penalty for reporting symptoms or hazards, or taking sick leave.

## Other important workplace practices

- ✓ Allow extra time for workers to do their jobs and take necessary precautions
- ✓ Remove productivity quotas to allow time for precautions
- ✓ Allow at least 12 hours off between shifts, for travel, rest and sleep
- ✓ Provide information to workers about mental health resources available to them



## INFORMATION AND TRAINING ARE ESSENTIAL

Employers must give all workers and supervisors information and training about possible job hazards, including special hazards of COVID-19. During the pandemic this includes:

- ✓ the workplace pandemic plan
- ✓ signs and symptoms of the virus, along with reporting symptoms and taking sick leave
- ✓ hand-washing and sanitizers
- ✓ new or changed tasks and procedures (e.g., cleaning, disinfecting), with related hazards and protections
- ✓ PPE – its purpose, limitations, safely putting on and taking off
- ✓ available community mental health resources
- ✓ procedures to de-escalate, report and deal with all types of violence
- ✓ available community mental health resources

**Information – including posters – should be easy to understand and provided in the workers' languages.**

## RESOURCES:

**For resources and up-to-date information on Coronavirus (COVID-19) visit:**

**[mflhcc.mb.ca/covid-19](https://mflhcc.mb.ca/covid-19)**



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