

Best Practice COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Ventilation

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The purpose of this factsheet is to provide best practice guidance on ventilation in the workplace and for events, to help protect against COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory viruses.

Please use this information alongside other Tasmanian best practice guidance, including *Best Practice COVID-19 Safety: for Employers*. Also review detailed Safe Work Australia COVID-19 ventilation guidelines.

Why ventilation is important

COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets.

When we cough and sneeze, and even sing, laugh, and talk, tiny respiratory droplets and aerosol particles (very tiny droplets) get forced into the air.

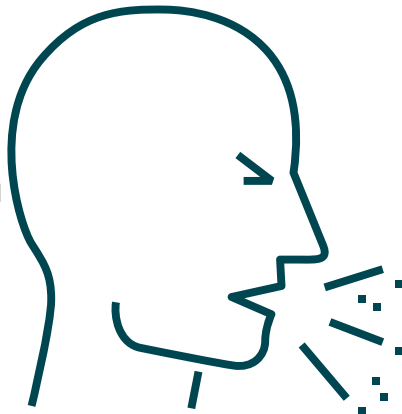
If a person has been infected with a respiratory virus, like the viruses that cause COVID-19, influenza or the common cold, these droplets will contain tiny amounts of the virus. When another person breathes those droplets in, they may be infected with the virus.

In short, one of the ways COVID-19 is spread, is through breathing in tiny respiratory droplets from a person who has the virus.

The more crowded and less ventilated a room is, the more droplets and particles there are likely to be.

You can reduce the risk indoors through ventilation or good air flow.

The more airflow, the more quickly droplets and aerosol particles are diffused, or fall out of the air. This helps slow the spread of illness. Good ventilation is an important control measure for respiratory viruses.



Best practice for good ventilation

- Bring fresh air in. Open doors, windows and vents where it is safe and feasible to do so.
- Consult professionals about improving ventilation in your building.
- Avoid using only recirculated air in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems; increase the intake of outside air.
- Arrange regular inspection, maintenance and cleaning of heating and air conditioning systems.
- Consider use of exhaust fans and air cleaning/purification devices; ensure they work properly if in place.
- Keep noise down. Noisy spaces encourage people to talk loudly, increasing the generation of aerosol particles.
- Avoid directing fans towards people's faces, and limit oscillation and turbulence of fans.

As well as having good ventilation:

- covering coughs and sneezes is important to minimise droplets being present in the air
- wearing face masks provides an effective barrier, and minimises droplets being breathed in; see *Best Practice Guidance: Use of Face masks*.

Further information

- Australian Health Protection Principal Committee Statement on the role of ventilation in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 (Australian Government Department of Health at www.health.gov.au)
- Improving ventilation in indoor workplaces - COVID-19 (SafeWork Australia at ww.covid19.swa.gov.au)
- Public Health
 - email: public.health@health.tas.gov.au
 - phone: 1800 671 738

The management of COVID-19 continues to evolve, and as evidence accumulates, advice may be revised. Updates are available at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au. If any information in this factsheet is inconsistent with information on that website, please use the information online.