

Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials! This guidance document is designed to help with wedding planning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

When planning your wedding, adhere to the current public health orders. A challenge of planning a wedding during the COVID-19 pandemic is that restrictions and case counts can change quickly, so it is important to be flexible. Family or cultural expectations may need to be adjusted to protect the safety of participants.

Read the [Roadmap to Reopen](#) and its accompanying [regulation](#) in order to determine what actions you must take when hosting a wedding.

Keep in mind that:

- Gathering limits are restricted.
- Banquet halls, event spaces, and food premises may close with short notice if our district or the province enters lockdown.
- Outdoor gatherings provide greater opportunity for physical distancing and provide the safest means of socializing. Plan events outdoors whenever possible, but be aware of the potential for inclement weather and have a back-up plan.

To reduce your risk of exposure to COVID-19, consider a very small ceremony, postponing your wedding to a later date, a drive-thru ceremony where guests remain in their vehicles, or a virtual celebration.

A. Wedding planning and working with vendors

- Work with your vendors to make informed decisions and avoid risks. Businesses should be familiar with the Timiskaming Health Unit's [webpage for workplaces and businesses](#), the Health Unit's [email communications to businesses](#), and guidance from the [Province of Ontario](#) and [Timiskaming Health Unit](#) that applies to their business sector.
- Ask your vendors about the COVID-19 precautions they are taking and their policies if you cancel or postpone your wedding. Businesses in Ontario are required to have a COVID-19 safety plan in place and to make the plan available to you upon request.
- **Review your vendor contracts and wedding insurance policy.** These documents may include information about additional COVID-19 risk management requirements and your rights and responsibilities in the events of cancellation, postponement, or illness.

- Try to be kind and flexible when working with your vendors. Businesses, including the wedding industry, have been impacted by the pandemic.
- Create a backup plan, which may include a smaller or virtual ceremony or a backup date in case a person who must be at your wedding (such as a member of the couple or your officiant) becomes ill.

B. Travel

Individuals traveling to a wedding should be aware of travel restrictions in the districts that they are travelling to and from. When booking travel, consider that restrictions can change with short notice. Non-essential travel is not recommended at this time. Travel recommendations from the Timiskaming Health Unit are available [here](#).

C. Follow gathering restrictions

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Government of Ontario has implemented mandatory restrictions on the number of people who can attend gatherings. **Note that gathering limits differ for wedding ceremonies and wedding receptions.**

These gathering limits are the maximum allowed if all staff and guests maintain a physical distance of 2 metres. An indoor gathering cannot be combined with an outdoor gathering to increase the limit on the number of attendees. Vendors count towards your gathering limit unless employed directly by the venue.

To see gathering limits for **wedding ceremonies** in each stage of the Government of Ontario's 3-step Roadmap to Reopening, click [here](#) and scroll down to the heading "Religious services, rites or ceremonies, including wedding services and funeral services (does not apply to receptions)." Gathering limits for **wedding receptions** are found in the same document under the heading "Gatherings."

D. Safety plans

- Become familiar with the safety plans of your venue and vendors. All businesses in Ontario are required by law to have a written safety plan. Safety plans must be posted in a conspicuous location and available by request.
- Consider creating a safety plan for your wedding, using the safety plan resources available [here](#).

E. Communicate with guests before the event

- Use technology, such as a wedding website or social media, to inform your guests about the precautions you are taking to keep everyone safe.
- Inform attendees that masks are required, unless exempt. Ask attendees to bring their own masks. Provide extras in case guests forget, lose, or soil their masks.

- Require guests to stay home if they are feeling unwell. **If anyone who plans to attend your wedding, including the couple, develops symptoms of COVID-19, the ill person and members of their household must stay home and self-isolate.**
- If hosting a virtual service, post instructions on how to access it online.

F. Remind guests to follow COVID-19 precautions

- Screen attendees. A [screening poster](#) must be posted at entrances of all venues in Ontario. Most venues are also required to actively screen patrons by asking screening questions. For information about which venues must actively screen, please see the [regulation](#).
- Use a variety of methods, including verbal announcements, signage, and pre-wedding communications, to remind guests to follow public health measures. Measures include staying home if they are sick, physical distancing, wearing a mask or face covering, handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, and downloading the COVID-19 Alert app. Remind guests to refrain from hugging, kissing, and shaking hands. **Note that certain signage is required. For a list of required signage and a link to all available posters, click [here](#).**
- Arrange seating by household and space members of different households at least 2 meters apart.
- Manage the flow of individuals to prevent crowding and maintain 2 metre separation. Consider entrances, exits, hallways, and washrooms, as well as wedding traditions such as a reception line. Use floor markings to encourage guests to maintain physical distancing.
- Have hand sanitizer available at entrances, exits, and other locations as needed.

G. Follow face mask requirements

- Masks are required by law in all indoor public spaces and in indoor workplaces. You should wear a mask indoors and outdoors when it's difficult to maintain a distance of 2 meters from people who don't live with you.
- The couple may remove their masks during the wedding ceremony.
- Guests must wear their masks at all times and may only remove them when eating. Remind guests to wear their mask so that it covers their nose, mouth, and chin.
- If the wedding involves performers such as musicians or dancers, performers must follow mask requirements and other requirements that are listed in the [Roadmap to Reopen](#) and its accompanying [regulation](#).
- A list of people who are exempt from wearing a mask is available [here](#).

H. Increase ventilation

- Increase ventilation by opening windows and increasing air exchange settings on HVAC systems, if possible.
- Ensure HVAC systems are properly maintained and replace filters as appropriate.
- Arrange furniture away from air vents and high airflow areas; direct fans upwards, away from people.

I. Modify your wedding plans

- Follow public health measures while getting ready for your wedding. The safest option is to get ready with members of your household only. If you decide to get ready with people outside your household (for example, members of a wedding party), follow gathering limits and wear a mask if it's difficult to maintain a 2-metre distance from people you don't live with. Do not share personal items, for example makeup brushes. **Note that in Step 1, indoor gatherings are allowed with members of your household only. Individuals who live alone and single parents may consider having exclusive, close contact with another household to help reduce the negative impacts of social isolation.**
- Avoid sharing objects (for instance, ceremonial objects, microphones used during wedding toasts, photo booth props). For guestbook signing, use a new pen for each guest or create an online guestbook.
- Consider individual hand sanitizer and personalized masks as gifts for guests.
- Limit close group photos to people in the same household. Wear a mask indoors and outdoors when it's difficult to maintain a distance of 2 meters from people who don't live with you.
- Consider limiting alcohol service to prevent guests from relaxing physical distancing measures.
- Dancing and mingling are not permitted except by the couple. The couple getting married are permitted to dance with their parents. Require guests to remain seated during the wedding ceremony and reception.

J. Food and drink

Food and drink restrictions vary significantly based on the province's level in the Roadmap to Reopen. For more details, see the [Roadmap to Reopen](#) and its [regulation](#), or work with an experienced caterer who is familiar with the restrictions.

K. Singing, music, and entertainment

- Singing and musical wind instruments can project respiratory droplets further than two metres, and are higher risk activities. Dancing, singing, and the live performance of brass or wind instruments are prohibited where food is served.
- Congregational singing is strongly discouraged, even with masks.
- Consider pre-recorded music or virtual performances.
- Vocalists and other musicians must perform behind a barrier such as plexiglass. Musicians should physical distance from each other and from guests, and should wear a mask when not performing.
- If live or recorded music is used, keep the volume low so the officiant, guests and staff do not need to speak louder, or lean closer to hear the conversation.
- Performers and officiant should have their own microphone. Do not share microphones.

L. Attendance list for contact tracing

- Keep a list of your guests and vendors in attendance, including phone numbers. If you have an existing vendor contact list and guest RSVP list, use them for contact tracing purposes as well. Information collected can only be used by public health for COVID-19 contact tracing. The attendance list can be deleted after 30 days.
- Encourage your guests to download the [COVID Alert app](#).
- If anyone develops symptoms of COVID-19, the ill person and members of their household must go home and self-isolate.