

# Clean Bathrooms Can Prevent Infectious Diseases



When it comes to workplace health and safety, sometimes the “health” part of the equation gets short shrift. So much focus is put on preventing workers from getting their hands stuck in machinery, getting burned by toxic chemicals, falling from heights, etc. that keeping workers from getting sick often doesn’t get enough attention.

But in many ways, the simplest steps are all that’s needed to keep workers from getting ill.

For example, the Ontario Ministry of Labour recently released a [fact sheet](#) on preventing infectious diseases at construction sites. The general thrust is that poor sanitary conditions at toilet and clean-up facilities can cause infectious diseases and get workers sick.

Although the fact sheet is aimed at construction sites, its safe work practices are applicable to many types of workplaces. So to ensure that your bathroom facilities aren’t endangering workers, consider the following advice:

- Provide (or make arrangements for) water flush toilets that are connected to a sanitary sewer or, if that’s not possible, chemical flush toilets that aren’t connected to a sanitary sewer.
- Ensure that the workplace has at least the minimum numbers of toilets required by OHS regulation per number of workers regularly employed at the

workplace and separate facilities for female workers, unless the facilities are intended to be used by only one worker at a time.

- Ensure that the workplace has an adequate number of urinals.
- Provide an adequate number of clean-up facilities as required by OHS regulation and ensure that they're equipped with wash basins, with both hot and cold running water where reasonably possible, paper towels and a trash receptacle or a hand dryer.
- When it isn't reasonably possible to provide running water, you can provide a hand cleanser that can be used without water, paper towels (and a trash receptacle) or a hand dryer.
- Ensure that the facilities are adequately heated, ventilated, illuminated and kept in good condition at all times.
- Ensure that all bathroom facilities are regularly serviced, cleaned and sanitized.
- Keep records of when they were serviced, cleaned and sanitized.
- Train workers on proper procedures when using the facilities and the importance of hand washing and sanitary conditions.
- Ensure that workers follow proper procedures and report injuries and illnesses, including infectious diseases.
- Inform workers of the dangers associated with poor hand hygiene and poor sanitation of bathroom facilities.