

1.3 TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 IN THE TRAIL ENVIRONMENT

According to public health officials, the risk of COVID-19 spreading through outdoor environments, where physical distancing is practiced, is currently thought to be low. Based on available public health information, the transmission of COVID-19 in the trail environment can occur directly when:

- A trail visitor inhales infected respiratory droplets that have been expelled by an infected person while breathing, talking, coughing or sneezing, or
- Trail visitors engage in close personal contact such as touching or shaking handsⁱ.

Transmission can also occur indirectly when:

- A trail visitor touches a contaminated surface that contains infected respiratory droplets and then touches their eyes, nose or mouth before washing their hands.

Though uncertainty still exists, current public health information indicates that the virus can survive on surfaces from several hours to days depending on:

- Type of surface (material),
- Temperature, and
- Humidity of the environment.

Some studies have found that the virus has been detectable up to two or three days on plastic and stainless steel surfaces, which are common surfaces in the trail environment (e.g. amenities, signs, gates, rails), and up to four hours on copper surfaces and up to 24 hours on cardboard surfacesⁱⁱ.

For additional information about COVID-19 see:

[COVID-19 Symptoms, Prevention & Risk](#)

For trail operators in Quebec, please also see Rando Québec's *Mesures de déconfinement pour la randonnée pédestre: Territoires et infrastructures* here:

<https://www.randoquebec.ca/info-covid-19/>

Though the overall risk of COVID-19 transmission is considered to be low, the risks may be increased in certain situations that take place on trails. Rando Québec, in their document "[Mesures de déconfinement pour la randonnée pédestre: Territoires et infrastructures](#)"ⁱⁱⁱ has ranked the relative risk of common situations along trails as follows:

Most Important Risks	Important Risks	Moderate Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close contact between visitors where physical distancing cannot be applied (e.g. distances of less than 2m)• Close contact between trail employees where physical distancing cannot be applied (e.g. distances of less than 2m)• Pinch points at the entrances to and exits from infrastructure• Restricted space at amenities and sites of interest during busy periods• Groups visiting the trail together who are not from the same household or cohort family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Close contact between trail employees and visitors• Sharing and renting of equipment• Holding activities indoors or enclosed amenities (e.g. lookouts)• Merging of 2 or more groups on the trail or close contact in restricted locations• Shared accommodations and amenities with shared common areas• Pets contacting others who are not from their household	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gathering of people at sites of interest or common areas (e.g. lookouts, beaches, tables, playground)• Inappropriate implementation of prevention / mitigation measures and directives by trail users• Groups passing on the trail• Interactions between staff and visitors during the sizing and adjustment of rental equipment

Note: Content in this table has been translated from Rando Québec's *Mesures de déconfinement pour la randonnée pédestre: Territoires et infrastructures* to the best of our understanding. Readers should review content in the report available at <https://www.randoquebec.ca/info-covid-19/>