

Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



COVID-19 Pandemic – Be Prepared, Be Well: How to care for yourself and others

April 14, 2020



If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.



Acknowledgements

This document has been revised, by the BC Ministry of Health, from the original October 2009 version, which had the following contributors:

- BC Ministry of Health
- BC Centre for Disease Control
- Fraser Health Authority
- Interior Health Authority
- Northern Health Authority
- Provincial Health Services Authority
- Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
- Vancouver Island Health Authority

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Pandemic: Prevention and Preparedness	4
2.1 Avoiding and Limiting the Spread of Infection.....	4
2.2 Preparing for Illness at Home	5
2.3 Treating those at home.....	6
2.4 Whom to Contact.....	8
2.5 Vaccination.....	10
Appendix A: When to seek Medical Care.....	11
A-1: How to Measure Breathing	12
Appendix B: Contact Information	13
Appendix C – Disinfection products active against coronaviruses	14
Appendix D Mental Health Support.....	15

1. Introduction

This guide is designed to provide advice relating to the outbreak of COVID-19, and how you can care for yourself and/or others through a pandemic.

Pandemic: For the purposes of this guide, the term “pandemic” refers to worldwide spread of a new disease, including sustained community transmission within British Columbia.

The new coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 that is circulating around the globe causes a disease called COVID-19. While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases.

The symptoms of COVID-19, are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold. They include cough, fever, and difficulty breathing. Until more is understood about the virus, older people and people with a weakened immune system or underlying medical conditions (like chronic heart, lung, or kidney diseases) are considered at higher risk of severe disease.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they cause diseases that range from the common cold to more severe diseases like Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

The viruses are spread through large liquid droplets when a person infected with a coronavirus coughs or sneezes; the virus in these droplets can enter through the eyes, nose, or throat of another person if they are in close contact with the person who coughed or sneezed. The virus does not transmit through particles in the air and is not something that can come in through the skin.

2. Pandemic: Prevention and Preparedness

2.1 Avoiding and Limiting the Spread of Infection

It is very important to remember that every pandemic is different, and necessary preventive actions will vary between events. The advice below is focused on actions for limiting the spread of COVID-19.

Personal health and hygiene

- Stay at home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.
- When at all possible, minimize leaving your home
- When outside your home, practice physical distancing by maintaining at least six feet of space between you and others
- Wash your hands regularly and frequently with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content
- Practice cough etiquette. Cough into your elbow or cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you sneeze. Immediately dispose of all used tissues in an appropriate waste bin and wash your hands right away.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands, especially if they are unwashed
- Avoid sharing utensils, cups or towels without washing them first with soap and hot water
- Do not share cigarettes, vaping devices, joints or bongs.
- If you smoke, try to quit (www.quitnow.ca), and do not allow others to smoke in the house or car
- If you live with domestic or farm animals take special care to wash your hands after contacting them
- Eat nutritious foods, including plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Get plenty of sleep and exercise regularly

At home

- Clean and disinfect areas that are touched by many people regularly such as bathrooms, kitchens, door handles.
- Remember that regular household cleaners are effective against a wide variety of viruses and bacteria (See Appendix C)
 - **Cleaning** physically removes, rather than kills, viruses and bacteria. It is done with water, detergents, and steady friction from a cleaning cloth
 - **Disinfection** kills viruses and bacteria and is only applied to objects; **never** on the human body

At work

- Stay home if you are sick and encourage others to do the same
- When at all possible, work from home / tele or virtual work
- Use a disinfectant to clean objects and hard surfaces that are handled by many (See Appendix C)
- Consider using teleconferencing, video conferencing, telephone, e-mails or fax instead of in-person meetings
- Wash your hands regularly and frequently with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content
- Practice cough etiquette. Cough into your elbow or cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you sneeze. Immediately dispose of all used tissues in an appropriate waste bin and wash your hands right away.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with your hands, especially if they are unwashed.

Visit the following sites for information regarding hand washing:

- https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/handwash_soap.pdf
- https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/handwash_sanitizer.pdf

Print and post this information in kitchens and bathrooms at home, work or school.

2.2 Preparing for Illness at Home

If you or a family member becomes ill, you should be prepared to cope at home if the symptoms are mild or moderate. For COVID-19, the expected time frame for self-isolation is 10 to 14 days, regardless of whether the diagnosis of COVID-19 is confirmed by laboratory testing or not.

Supplies to stock up on, especially if you live alone

- Non-perishable food items, such as canned or frozen soups, juices, fruits and vegetables, canned fish, crackers, and peanut butter
- Household cleaning supplies, such as bleach or disinfectant, dishwashing soap and paper towels
- Personal hygiene products such as soap, hand sanitizer, shampoo and toilet paper
- A fever thermometer
- Over-the-counter fever medications, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Prescription medications with 2-3 months supply, if possible

Housekeeping

- Wash hard surfaces such as taps, counters, doorknobs, telephones and railings with a disinfectant or commercial cleaner, ideally multiple times per day (See Appendix C)
- Keep the personal items such as toothbrush, cups, cell phones of those who are sick separate from everyone else's
- All used paper towel, masks and tissues should be put into trash cans lined with a plastic bag
- Empty garbage frequently, and be careful to wash your hands afterwards
- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with the person who is sick
- Laundry should be placed in a laundry basket with a plastic liner and can be washed with regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C).

Look after others

- Find a person who can be your "buddy" so that if you get sick, they can go to the pharmacy or store for you - and you can be someone else's "buddy" too
- Use technology such as phone and video calls to keep in touch with friends and family or check up on your neighbours, especially those who live alone and/or are elderly. If you can only check with them in person, maintain physical distance when you see them.
- If you are providing direct care to someone who is ill, you are considered a contact and should avoid visiting others
- Offer to get groceries and run errands for people who are sick, or are at higher risk of getting serious complications if they become sick
- Keep emergency phone numbers and self-care instructions in a place where everyone in the household can find them

2.3 Treating those at home

Caring for yourself or others at home may be common during a pandemic, especially one involving a respiratory disease outbreak. Seeking medical care may also be appropriate (Appendix A offers some guidance on when this might be appropriate). Ask for help from family members or friends if you need it. The following specifics will help you respond to a COVID-19 infection.

Containing the virus if you are sick

- Do not go to work
- Do not go to public areas, including places of worship, stores, shopping malls and restaurants
- Do not take buses, taxis or ride-sharing where you would be in contact with others

- Do not have visitors to your home
- Keep away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions, for example, those who have diabetes, lung problems, heart disease or weakened immune system.
- Keeping 2 metres distance (6 feet) between you and others
- Stay home for at least 10 days after you first get sick. You may return to your regular activities if: After 10 days you feel better, symptoms have improved AND you have had no fever for 72 hours, whichever is later.
- If leaving your home for medical care, call ahead and tell the medical facility that you are coming in so they can prepare for you
- Stay in your room as much as possible and keep 2 metres (6 feet) distance between you and others
- If more than one person in the home is ill with the same illness, they can share a room
- If you are sharing your home, stay and sleep in a room with good airflow that is away from others
- Use a separate bathroom if you can
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and discard immediately into a garbage-bag lined bin - or cough or sneeze into the crook of your arm
- Wash your clothes as you would normally in the laundry, using hot water
- Use regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C) in your washing machine and dry clothes well. Do not shake your clothes before you load them in the washing machine.
- Wear a surgical mask if possible to prevent the spread of fluids when you are around others

Caring for the sick at home

- Sick people will probably feel very tired and weak - resting allows their body to recover
- Water, juices, clear broths and soups will replace lost fluids, especially if there is a fever
- Try to drink a glass of water for every hour of being awake
- If urine is dark, that is a sign to drink more fluids
- Clean your hands with soap and water immediately after handling any laundry or garbage from sick people
- If possible, have only one person care for those who are sick to limit the number of people exposed
- If possible, you should not be a care giver if you are pregnant or at high-risk for complications such as diabetes, chronic lung, kidney, or heart disease
- After use, items that can be should be washed with soap or detergent in warm water. No special soap is needed. Dishes can be placed in the dishwasher

Medications and remedies

- If you need medications, use a pharmacy delivery service, ask a friend or family to pick up and bring them to your home.
- Anti-fever medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be helpful
- Never give products containing ASA (Aspirin™) to any child under the age of 16 years; use of ASA products by children can lead to Reye's syndrome, a serious condition affecting the nervous system and liver
- Over the counter cold medications can help with some symptoms, but should not be used in children under 6 years old

What to do for a fever

- Anti-fever medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can be helpful
- Take off heavy clothing and blankets
- Dress in lightweight clothing and keep room temperature at 20°C
- Give lukewarm sponge or tub baths, never use alcohol rubs

2.4 Whom to Contact

BC residents can visit HealthLink BC's user-friendly website to directly access reliable, up-to-date information during a pandemic. Visit HealthLink BC online or call 24-hours a day/seven days a week if you have questions or concerns. Translation services are available in over 130 languages.

HealthLink BC: www.healthlinkbc.ca

8-1-1 (toll-free)

7-1-1 (deaf & hard of hearing)

In case of emergency, call: 9-1-1

For recommendations on protecting yourself and your community from COVID-19, visit:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/>

Use the self-assessment tool or download the app at: <https://bc.thrive.health/>

For non-medical questions about COVID-19, call 1-888-COVID-19 or visit: www.gov.bc.ca/covid19

For the latest videos and livestreaming of COVID-19 media availabilities: on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/BCProvincialGovernment/> on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BCGovNews>

Other Web Links

Government of BC: www.gov.bc.ca

HealthLink BC: www.healthlinkbc.ca

Immunize BC: www.immunizebc.ca

BC Centre for Disease Control: www.bccdc.ca

BC CDC COVID-19 Site: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))

Health Authorities

Fraser Health: www.fraserhealth.ca

Interior Health: www.interiorhealth.ca

Northern Health: www.northernhealth.ca

Provincial Health Services: www.phsa.ca

Vancouver Coastal Health: www.vch.ca

Vancouver Island Health: www.viha.ca

Other important contact information that should be readily accessible:

- Doctor
- Local Walk-In Clinics: names, locations and hours of operation
- Local Pharmacies: names, locations and hours of operation

If leaving your home for medical care, call ahead and tell the medical facility that you are coming in so they can prepare for you.

The above information is also listed in Appendix E; you may want to print that page and put it on your refrigerator or near your telephone, or add these contacts to your phone directory

2.5 Vaccination

Because SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus infecting humans, there are no vaccines available to prevent this infection, although a variety of development efforts are underway. Use the advice in this guide to protect yourself against getting infected or from spreading it to others.

Routine vaccination continues to be recommended and is especially important for infants and young children. Immunization service providers are well versed in how to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in immunization clinics.

People at higher risk of respiratory complications such as older adults, special populations, and those who are immunocompromised should also ensure their vaccines are up to date, including pneumococcal pneumonia vaccine.

Appendix A: When to seek Medical Care

Pandemics can be extremely diverse, and the health impacts that they cause can vary greatly in their symptomology and severity. When individuals should seek medical care varies depending on what symptoms are associated with a particular event, and the current status of the health system. Below are some general guidelines for the general population, as well as caretakers.

A person should generally seek medical care if they experience shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or if a fever continues more than three days despite taking anti-fever medication. For parents with a young child who is ill, seek medical care if a child has fast or labored breathing, or continuing fever. **A change in mental status, like confusion or lethargy, also is a warning sign.** In the event that you are unsure if other symptoms require medical attention, consult the resources listed in Appendix B.

Supportive care at home - resting, drinking plenty of fluids and using a pain reliever for aches – can be effective in many cases, but you should monitor official sources for specific information regarding ongoing pandemics. See Appendix B for places you can find more information.

A-1: How to Measure Breathing

The information below is intended to be general information that is applicable for any pandemic that impacts respiratory function including COVID-19. The criteria below should not be considered a comprehensive list of symptoms that would require professional medical care.

Adults and older children:

Watch the chest rise and fall with each breath. Use a watch or clock and count the number of times the chest rises or expands in one minute (60 seconds).

Children and infants:

Watch the stomach rise and fall with each breath. You should uncover the child so you can see the stomach. Use a watch or clock and count the number of times the stomach rises or expands in one minute (60 seconds).

Compare the number you counted to the chart below. If the child's breathing rate is the same or over the number in the chart, it is a sign that the child is having trouble breathing and you should contact 8-1-1 or your family physician. If the child has other symptoms or behaviors that you are concerned about, like being lethargic or not wanting to be held, seek medical advice.

Breathing Rates – When to seek Medical Attention	
Age	Number of breaths per minute
Less than 2 months old	Over 60 breaths per minute
2 months to 1-year old	Over 50 breaths per minute
1 to 5-year old	Over 40 breaths per minute
5 years to adult	Over 30 breaths per minute
In children under 5 years of age, signs of troubled breathing include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• grunting with breathing;• squeaking or wheezing noise with breathing;• flaring nostrils with each breath; and• chest rising opposite to the stomach rising.	

Appendix B: Contact Information

***Print this page and put it on your refrigerator or near your telephone.
Add these as contacts to your phone directory***

Key Contacts

HealthLink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca

811 (toll-free) General information, including risk and test information

711 (deaf & hard of hearing)

In case of emergency, call: 911

On the web

Government of BC: www.gov.bc.ca

General information from the provincial government

HealthLink BC: www.healthlinkbc.ca

General health resource for all British Columbians

Immunize BC: www.immunizebc.ca

Immunization information and tools

BC Centre for Disease Control: www.bccdc.ca

Specific information, including updates and resources

Health Authorities

Specific information from your health authority

Fraser Health: www.fraserhealth.ca

Interior Health: www.interiorhealth.ca

Northern Health: www.northernhealth.ca

Provincial Health Services: www.phsa.ca

Vancouver Coastal Health: www.vch.ca

Vancouver Island Health: www.viha.ca

Important contact information for you

Your Doctor _____

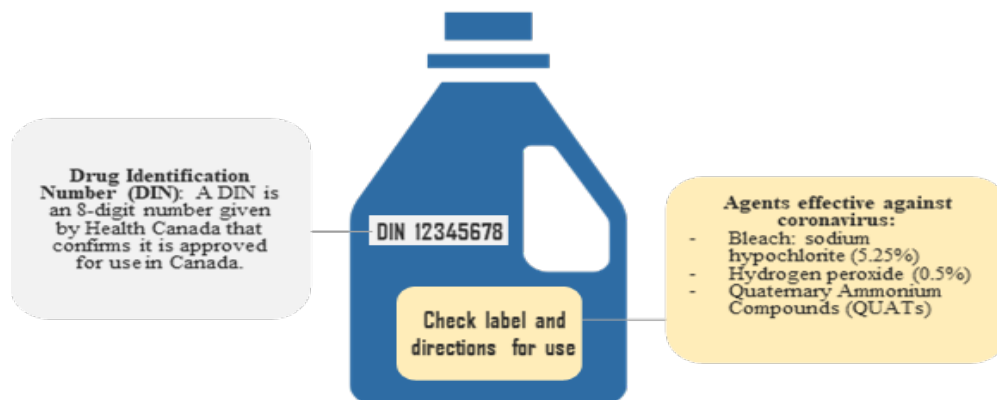
Local Walk-In Clinics (names, locations and hours of operation)

Local Pharmacies (names, locations and hours of operation)

Appendix C – Disinfection products active against coronaviruses

For frequently touched or contaminated surfaces, the below list will help you choose cleaning products. Often janitorial product outlets carry these products.

- ▶ Ensure disinfectant product has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) on its label.
- ▶ *Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions* for dilution, contact time and safe use.
- ▶ Soiled surfaces should be cleaned before disinfecting (unless otherwise stated on the product).



List of disinfecting agents and their working concentrations effective against coronaviruses^{1,2}:

Agent and Concentration	Uses
1. Chlorine: Household bleach – sodium hypochlorite (5.25%) 1:100 (500 ppm solution) 10 ml bleach to 990 ml water	Used for disinfecting general surfaces, e.g., hand railings, grab handles, door knobs, cupboard handles.
2. Chlorine: Household bleach - sodium hypochlorite (5.25%) 1:50 (1,000ppm solution) 20 ml bleach to 980 ml water	Used for disinfecting surfaces contaminated with bodily fluids and waste like vomit, diarrhea, mucus, or feces (after cleaning with soap and water first). Allow surface to air dry naturally.
3. Accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide 0.5%	Used for disinfecting general surfaces (e.g. counters, hand rails, door knobs).
4. Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (QUATs)	Used for disinfecting of general surfaces (e.g., floors, walls, furnishings)

The BC Ministry of Health does not endorse or promote any specific brands of disinfectant products. If you have any questions about specific products for prevention of coronavirus, please contact PICNet at picnet@phsa.ca

¹ Dellanno, Christine, Quinn Vega, and Diane Boesenberg. "The antiviral action of common household disinfectants and antiseptics against murine hepatitis virus, a potential surrogate for SARS coronavirus." *American journal of infection control* 37.8 (2009): 649-652.

² Provincial Infection Prevention Control Network of British Columbia. "Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines for Providing Healthcare to Clients Living in the Community." (2014). https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/PICNet_Home_and_Community_Care_Guidelines_2014_.pdf

Appendix D Mental Health Support

During a pandemic, people can experience a wide range of mental health impacts due to personal infection, the infection of loved ones, or any number of other social factors. Below is collection of mental health supports that are available to people in British Columbia.

Virtual mental health supports for everyone:

- **BounceBack** – Expanding access to free online, video and phone-based coaching and skills-building program so that more seniors, adults and youth who are experiencing low mood, mild to moderate depression, anxiety, stress or worry, can receive care. (Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division). Available now. For more information, visit: www.cmha.bc.ca/covid-19
- **Virtual counselling services** – Expanding access to virtual community counselling for individuals or groups at low or no cost. A list of community counselling agencies offering virtual support is online. Available now. For more information, visit: www.cmha.bc.ca/covid-19
- **Peer support and system navigation** – Expanding access to virtual mentoring and supports by increasing the number of peer support and system navigation workers. (Canadian Mental Health Association). Available now. For more information, visit: www.cmha.bc.ca/covid-19
- **Living Life to the Full** – Launching access to free virtual Living Life to the Full peer support and practical skills courses for coping with stress, problem solving and boosting mood. The eight-week course is led by a trained facilitator. (Canadian Mental Health Association – BC Division). Available now. For more information, visit: www.cmha.bc.ca/covid-19
- **B.C. COVID-19 mental health self-assessment tool** – Launching a set of mental health screening self-tests alongside the COVID-19 self-assessment tool. (Canadian Mental Health Association). Available April 20. For more information, visit: www.cmha.bc.ca/covid-19


Virtual mental health supports for youth:

- **Foundry Virtual Clinic** – Nine existing virtual Foundry centres are now accepting virtual walk-in counselling. A new provincewide youth-focused virtual clinic with counselling, peer support, primary care and family support for young people aged 12 to 24 and their families will be available via voice, video and chat. Available April 20, 2020. For more information, visit: www.foundrybc.ca

Virtual mental health supports for seniors:

- **BC211** – The Province has already expanded bc211, a provincewide information and referral service, to match seniors whose support network has been affected by the COVID-19 outbreak with volunteers. This service will take calls from people who would like to volunteer to help seniors in their community with basic needs, including grocery shopping and pharmacy drop-offs and check-ins. Available now. For more information, visit: <http://www.bc211.ca/>

Virtual mental health supports for victims of family or sexual violence:

- **VictimLink BC** – Immediate 24/7 crisis support for victims of family or sexual violence is available by phone through VictimLink BC's 24/7 telephone service. Available now. For more information, call 1 800 563-0808  or email: VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca