

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Updated on January 15, 2021

This info sheet on COVID-19 (coronavirus) covers precautions that both employers and workers can take to avoid contracting and spreading the virus. At the time of this update, B.C. has declared a state of emergency and a public health emergency.

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19. COVID-19 was first identified in late 2019. It was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold. They include:

- coughing
- sneezing
- fever or chills
- sore throat
- loss of sense of smell or taste
- diarrhea
- difficulty breathing
- muscle or body aches
- headache
- congestion or runny nose
- shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing
- loss of appetite
- nausea or vomiting
- extreme fatigue or tiredness

At this time, the available information suggests the incubation period is up to 14 days. The incubation period is the time from when a person is first exposed until symptoms appear.

How does coronavirus spread?

Coronavirus spreads from an infected person to others through respiratory droplets and aerosols created when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, shouts, or talks. The droplets vary in size from large droplets that fall to the ground rapidly (within seconds or minutes) near the infected person, to smaller droplets, sometimes called aerosols, which linger in the air under some circumstances. People could catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. If they are standing within six feet (2 metres) of a person with COVID-19 they can catch it by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them.

Step's employers can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

All workplaces should have COVID-19 specific policies and procedures with appropriate preventative measures outlined, including training, implementation of PPE, and proper cleaning/sanitation procedures.

- If practicable, employers should curtail non-essential work at the workplace and consider having workers work remotely (e.g., work at home)
- If it is necessary for workers to come to work, employers should put preventative measures in place such as:
 - where practicable, reconfigure the workplace to maintain at least 6 feet (2 metres) between workstations,
 - where possible, utilize appropriate barriers such as plexiglass,
 - encourage physical distancing (maintain six feet distance (2 metres)),
 - limit worker travel,
 - ensure masks that cover the nose and mouth are worn at all times,
 - reduce face-to-face meetings.



- make sure workplaces are clean and hygienic by keeping surfaces (e.g., desks and tables) and objects (e.g., telephones, keyboards) clean and disinfecting regularly. Make hygiene materials such as sanitizers available (with at least 60% alcohol).
- reinforce personal hygiene messages such as handwashing to workers and anyone else who may enter your workplace.

Steps workers can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19 if entering the workplace:

- Use PPE as recommended (mask, face-shield, and gloves).
- Masks are recommended in workplaces where physical barriers may not be available.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) if you are unable to wash hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve and not your hands.
- Maintain a distance of six feet (2 metres) or more from others.
- Stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.



Other preventative measures that can be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19:

Physical Distancing: Physical distancing is a way that you can slow the spread of COVID-19 by limiting close contact with others. This includes limiting activities outside your home, staying home when you're sick, avoid gatherings, and if you are out in public keep six feet distance (2 metres) between you and others.

Self-Monitoring: If you have reason to believe that you have been exposed to a person with COVID-19, then monitor yourself for 14 days for one or more symptoms of COVID-19.

Quarantine: If you have been exposed/in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or travelled outside of Canada in the past 14 days then you need to quarantine and avoid contact with other people.

What to do if you have symptoms that may be COVID-19

- Use the B.C. [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if you need to be tested for COVID-19.
- See the BCCDC page on COVID-19 [Testing](#) for more information.
- Once you have been tested you should [self-isolate](#) while you wait for the test results.
- If your test is negative, you should not return to work or school until you are feeling better.
- If you feel unwell and are unsure about your symptoms, contact your health care provider or call 8-1-1.

Please refer to the following links to keep updated about the latest information -

- [Actsafeca](#)
- [Worksafebc.com](#)
- [BCCDC.ca](#)
- More COVID-19 related information can be found on the Actsafe website [here](#).

This info sheet was developed using various resources including BCCDC, WorkSafeBC, and Government of Canada.