Handling Respiratory Illnesses

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The rates of respiratory illness are on the rise in B.C. We need to use many tools to get us through respiratory illness season. Below are resources and reminders to support you during respiratory illness season.

Respiratory illness and children

Several respiratory viruses are causing illness in B.C. Some children have had more severe illness in the past few weeks. Children are getting especially sick from influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Many children have not been exposed to influenza and other respiratory illnesses after two years of low rates of the flu. This is why it's especially important for children to get vaccinated against influenza now.

Starting in October 2023, everyone 6 months and older can get an updated influenza (flu) and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time. For information on booking your flu and COVID-19 vaccines, visit the BC Government [Respiratory Illness](#) page.

How can I prevent respiratory illnesses?

Vaccinations remain the best defence against both influenza and COVID-19. You should receive all doses you are eligible for and encourage friends and family to do the same. Both health-care workers and the public can book influenza and COVID vaccinations through the [Get Vaccinated system](#). This is the same system used to book COVID-19 vaccine appointments.

Beyond vaccinations, we can all help prevent the spread of respiratory illness by:

1. Staying at home if you feel unwell and try to avoid spending time with people at higher risk of serious illness
2. Practicing respiratory etiquette: Wear a mask in crowded, public spaces, and cough and sneeze into your elbow
3. Cleaning your hands regularly
4. Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, mouth and nose

For more information on how to protect yourself and your loved ones, read more from [First Nations Health Authority's webpage, Respiratory Illness Season is Here Again: How to Protect Yourself](#).

Making a Decision to Seek Care

The Emergency Room (ER) in hospitals can be very busy, especially during the winter and holidays. For critical or life-threatening conditions, call **9-1-1** or go to the nearest emergency department. Some examples of emergencies include, but are not limited to:

- chest pains
- difficulty breathing
- severe bleeding
- loss of consciousness
- broken bones, or suspected broken bones
- stroke or heart attack symptoms
- symptoms of sepsis
- pain in early pregnancy

Babies younger than 3 months of age, with a fever should be assessed by a doctor, their family doctor or an emergency room doctor, as soon as possible. They can get very sick quickly and require an aggressive approach to investigate the underlying cause. To learn more about when to take your child to the emergency room see:

- [BC Children's Hospital: When to bring your child to the BC Children's Emergency Department](#)
- [First Nations Health Authority: Respiratory Virus Season: Making Healthy Decisions](#)
- [Fraser Health Authority: Parents' guide to using the ER wisely](#)

For more information on symptoms and when to seek care see:

1. [Information for parents seeking medical care for children (ChildHealthBC.ca)](#): This resource can help families assess and decide if their child needs medical care. Translations available in [Arabic](#), [Punjabi](#) and [Simplified Chinese](#)
2. [When to bring your child to the Emergency Department (BC Children's Hospital)](#): Additional examples to help families decide if their child needs emergency care
3. **8-1-1** [HealthLink BC](#): Families can speak to a registered nurse any time, every day of the year
4. Safe and accurate temperature taking: [HealthLinkBC File #99 How to Take a Temperature: Children and Adults](#)
5. Details about the causes of fever, treatment, prevention, and a symptom checker to assist your decisions to seek care:
   - [Fever or chills, age 11 or younger (HealthLinkBC.ca)](#)
   - [Fever or Chills, Age 12 and Older (HealthLinkBC.ca)](#)
   - [Coughs, Age 11 and Younger](#)
   - [Coughs, Age 12 and Older](#)

Common lung disease and respiratory conditions

Learn information about common lung disease and respiratory conditions by visiting our [Lung and Respiratory Conditions](#) page or selecting the specific conditions below.

- [Acute Bronchitis](#)
- [Asthma](#)
- [Colds](#)
- [Coronavirus (COVID-19)](#)
- [Croup](#)
- [Influenza (Seasonal Flu)](#)
- [Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) Infection](#)
- [Sinusitis](#)
- [Whooping Cough (Pertussis)](#)

Other respiratory conditions

- [Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS)](#)
- [Allergic Rhinitis](#)
- [Breathing Smoke or Fumes](#)
- [Bronchiectasis](#)
- [Bronchiolitis](#)
- [Black Lung Disease](#)
- [Chronic Lung Disease in Infants](#)
- [Collapsed Lung (Pneumothorax)](#)
- [COPD](#)
- [Cystic Fibrosis](#)
- [Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS)](#)
- [Pleural Effusion](#)
- [Pleurisy](#)
- [Pneumonia](#)
- [Pulmonary Embolism](#)
- [Pulmonary (Lung) Nodules](#)
- [Sarcoidosis](#)
- [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)](#)
- [Sleep Apnea](#)
- [Snoring](#)
- [Snoring and Obstructive Sleep Apnea](#)
- [Tuberculosis (TB)](#)

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