Testing

The BCCDC COVID-19 testing guidelines have been updated to reflect new evidence about COVID-19 symptoms. Some symptoms, like fever or chills, cough, loss of sense of smell or taste, and trouble breathing are more likely to be COVID-19.

For people who do not know if they had a contact with someone with COVID-19, you need a COVID-19 test if you have new or worsening symptoms.

If you have 1 or more of these key symptoms, seek testing as soon as possible:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Difficulty breathing

If you have 2 or more of the symptoms below for more than 24 hours, and they are not related to any other pre-existing conditions, seek testing.

These symptoms are:

- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

A COVID-19 test is also recommended if you are a close contact of someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and you have even one of the following COVID-19 symptoms:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

A person with mild symptom(s) may elect to seek COVID-19 testing, even when it is not required.
You need to self-isolate while you wait for your test result so you don’t potentially spread COVID-19 to others.

Testing is not recommended if you do not have symptoms, even if you are a close contact. Some symptoms could be signs of other conditions or medical issues and you may need to seek medical care, even if it’s not related to COVID-19. If you feel unwell and are unsure about your symptoms, contact your health care provider or call 8-1-1.

Visit the BC Centre for Disease Control page for more information about testing for COVID-19 and close contacts.

Testing for Children and Youth

Children have similar symptoms to adults, but the symptoms are milder.

B.C. offers two options for COVID-19 testing school-age students in kindergarten to grade 12. The most common method is swishing and gargling sterile water and spitting it into a collection tube. This test is easier for children and youth to use. It will replace the swab test for most people 5 years of age and older.

There are some key points to keep in mind when taking your child for testing:

- Watch a video about what you and your child can expect during a COVID-19 test:
  - COVID-19 test with a mouth rinse and gargle for school aged children (Video)
  - COVID-19 test with a nose swab (Video)
- Practice the swish, gargle and spit technique with water at home. Make sure to practice at least two hours before going to a collection centre as this may affect the test results. Ask your child not to swallow the water or talk when they practice.
  - Instructions for mouth rinse/gargle sample collection for younger children (PDF 213MB)
  - Instruction of the mouth rinse/gargle sample collection for older children (PDF 207MB)
- Find a collection centre where children can be tested or contact your health care provider about testing.
- Your child will need to self-isolate after their test. This means you should go directly home after their test. Your child should stay home from school and not see visitors. Learn more about self-isolating after a test.

For information about the process and what to expect and how to access and understand test results see COVID-19 Testing for Children and Youth.

Collection Centres

Learn more about testing and find collection centres where you can be tested. Click the map or visit the links below. You can also call 8-1-1 to find the nearest centre.
It is particularly important to test symptomatic individuals who are at higher risk. These individuals will continue to be prioritized and includes health-care workers, essential services providers and individuals who are vulnerable to complications due to COVID-19.

Test Results

COVID-19 test results are available by phone, by text or online. If you test positive, public health will contact you.

To get your COVID-19 test results through an automated text message, you can register for this service by completing the webform on the BCCDC: Test Results webpage. Parents can also use this service for their children. Once you’ve registered for this service you will receive your negative or positive test results by text as soon as the result is available, day or night.

You can also get your COVID-19 test results by calling the BCCDC COVID-19 Results line at 1-833-707-2792. The line is open from 8:30am to 4:30pm, seven days a week.
The Health Gateway or my ehealth are other ways you can receive your COVID-19 test results. To learn more about how to get your test results and what to do once you receive your results, see:

- BCCDC: Test Results
- BCCDC: Understanding Test Results

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The information provided above has been adapted from the BCCDC: Testing, BCCDC: Test Results and BCCDC: Understanding Test Results pages accessed January 8, 2021.