

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Common Questions about COVID-19

Find answers to some of the [most common questions about COVID-19](#). Learn how it spreads, how long after exposure symptoms take to appear and what symptoms to look for. Find out what you can do to prevent COVID-19.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an illness caused by a coronavirus. COVID-19 has spread worldwide, including to British Columbia, and has been declared a global pandemic.

B.C.'s COVID-19 Immunization Plan

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, including topics like the vaccine approval process and B.C.'s plan for vaccine distribution, see:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Getting a COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Government of BC: COVID-19 Immunization Plan](#)
- [COVID-19 mRNA Vaccines \(HealthLinkBC File #124\)](#)

If you have other questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, such as who is getting it and when, please call 1-888-COVID-19 (1-888-268-4319).

Testing

Testing for COVID-19 is recommended for anyone with cold, influenza or COVID-like symptoms, even mild symptoms. Testing is not required if you do not have symptoms. You do not need a referral or to call **8-1-1**. Learn more about [testing and where you can get tested](#).

Symptoms

Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses including the flu and common cold. Some people may experience mild symptoms, while others have more severe symptoms. If you have COVID-19, or think you might have it, help prevent spreading it to others by self-isolating from the start of your symptoms. If you are sick, stay home.

To learn about COVID-19 symptoms, what to do if you are feeling ill, and who may be at higher risk for complications, see [Symptoms of COVID-19](#).

Reduce Your Risk of Infection

Coronavirus is spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets spread when a person coughs or sneezes

- Close personal contact such as touching or shaking hands
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

It is important to keep about 2 metres away from a person who is sick, to reduce breathing in droplets if they cough or sneeze.

Learn more about how to [reduce your risk of infection](#).

Keeping Transmission Low

Physical distancing

Physical distancing from others continues to be important when outside your home. Carry on with these simple tips to help keep the transmission of COVID-19 low.

- Stay at home and keep a safe distance from family when you have cold or flu symptoms
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- No handshaking or hugs outside of your family
- Keep a physical distance of about 2 metres between yourself and others when you are out.

To learn more about how you can protect yourself and others, see [BC Centre for Disease Control: Physical Distancing](#).

Masks

Masks act as a barrier and help stop droplets from spreading when you talk, laugh, sing, cough or sneeze. Using a mask in combination with the above preventative measures can help protect those around you.

Non-medical or cloth mask

A cloth mask can help prevent respiratory droplets of an unknowingly infected person from coming into contact with others outside the home. Wearing a non-medical, cloth mask, or face covering is now required of all British Columbians, 12 years and older, in many public indoor settings because it can help protect you and those around you. This is because some people can spread the virus when they have very mild symptoms or may not know that they are infected. Non-medical masks may not be required where COVID-19 safety plans and measures like cohorts and health checks are in use such as in classrooms. People who cannot put on or remove a mask on their own are exempt.

Do not put a face mask or any covering including visors and eye protection on infants under two years of age.

Medical masks

Medical masks are required for patients, clients and visitors to most health care facilities. They are also recommended if you have symptoms of COVID-19 or you are caring for a person with COVID-19 symptoms.

Wearing a mask alone will not protect you from COVID-19. Keep practicing preventive measures such as frequent hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting your surfaces and objects and physical distancing as much as possible. To learn more about wearing a mask and types of masks, see [BC Centre for Disease Control: Masks](#).

Staying close to home

Staying close to home helps reduce the chance of spreading COVID-19. Self-isolation is mandatory after international travel. Learn more about travel within and outside of Canada at [Travel and COVID-19](#).

Self-isolation

Self-isolation means staying home and avoiding contact with others. It is an important measure in stopping the spread of illness.

If you live in the same household with someone who has COVID-19 or has respiratory symptoms that started within 14 days of returning to Canada, you are at high risk of exposure and spreading the infection to others. Self-isolate at home for 14 days. If possible, stay in separate rooms, sleep in separate beds and use separate bathrooms.

Anyone who may have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or has returned from international travel should self-isolate and watch for symptoms of COVID-19 that can appear up to 14 days after exposure to the virus.

Anyone with COVID-like symptoms should self-isolate after symptoms start.

To learn more about self-isolation and who should self-isolate and ending, see [Self-Isolation and COVID-19](#).

Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring means paying close attention to how you feel. Record your temperature and watch for any COVID-like symptoms. You may also need to help children or close contacts who are older or chronically ill and are self-monitoring. To find out what symptoms to look for, see:

- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Symptoms](#)

To learn more about self-monitoring, see:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control How to self-monitor](#) (PDF, 477KB)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Daily Self-Monitoring Form for COVID-19](#) (PDF, 257KB)

Public Exposures

With the increase in social interactions in our communities, you may be concerned about public exposures, see [BC Centre for Disease Control: COVID-19 Public Exposures](#).

For information about community exposures from your local health authority, see:

- [First Nations Health Authority](#)

- [Fraser Health](#)
- [Interior Health](#)
- [Island Health](#)
- [Northern Health](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health](#)

As social interactions continue in our community, you may also be concerned about socializing safely. To learn more about safe socializing to reduce risk of COVID-19 exposure, see:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Event Planning](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Safer Social Interactions](#)

Treatment

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Many of the symptoms can be managed at home. Drink plenty of fluids, get plenty of rest and use a humidifier or hot shower to ease a cough or sore throat. Over the counter medication (e.g. Tylenol) can be used to reduce fever and aches. If you are recording your temperature, do this before taking fever-reducing medicines or wait 4 hours after the last dose.

Most people recover from coronaviruses on their own. People who develop a more serious illness may need supportive care in or out of the hospital. If you do need to see a health care provider, call them ahead of time so they can arrange for you to be assessed safely. Wear a mask to protect others.

Doctors and nurse practitioners are available to provide in-person care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some offices may offer telephone and video appointments as well. If you need care, please contact your health care provider. If you do not have a regular health care provider, you can use the [HealthLinkBC Directory](#) or call **8-1-1** to find a health care provider in your community.

When seeing a health care provider, please tell them

- Your symptoms
- Where you have been travelling or living
- If you had close or prolonged contact with a sick person, especially if they had a fever, cough or difficulty breathing

For more information on what you can do if you have symptoms, see [Symptoms and COVID-19](#).

Mental Health

The COVID-19 pandemic can bring up feelings of confusion, sadness and anxiety that are hard to manage. These are normal feelings when faced with uncertainty. It is more important than ever to take care of your mental health and be kind to yourself. Learn more about mental health and COVID-19:

- [Mental Health and COVID-19](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Mental well-being during COVID-19](#)
- [Government of Canada: Taking Care of Your Mental Health](#) (PDF 371KB)

Children, Youth and Families

Parenting during the pandemic can be challenging. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you may have questions about your health and your baby's health. You may have additional concerns about parenting while your children are staying home. Learn more about infant and maternal health and helping your children cope during the pandemic:

- [Children, Youth and Families During COVID-19](#)

Medications

As the COVID-19 pandemic progresses, changes have been made to ways pharmacists can provide medications. This includes providing refills and emergency supplies of prescription drugs. Pharmacists are not able to provide new medications without a prescription. To learn more about changes to pharmacy services, visit the [College of Pharmacists of British Columbia: Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) site.

Useful Resources

There is a lot of information about COVID-19 and the province's response to the pandemic. For a list of the trusted sources we use at HealthLinkBC **8-1-1** to provide British Columbians with health information and advice see [Useful Resources for COVID-19](#).

For information on COVID-19 in other languages, see [BC Centre for Disease Control's Translated Content](#) page. American sign language videos are also available.

If you have concerns or questions about your health contact HealthLinkBC (**8-1-1**) at any time or speak with your health care provider.

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The information provided in the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Health Feature has been adapted from the [BCCDC: Testing](#), [BCCDC: Symptoms](#) and [BCCDC: COVID-19 Vaccine](#) pages, accessed January 29, 2021.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.