

Coronavirus (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. Respiratory infections caused by COVID-19 first appeared in Wuhan City, China in December 2019. The outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the WHO on January 30, 2020 and declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. A pandemic is when an infectious disease spreads across the globe. This is different than an epidemic which is usually contained within a region or country.

Although COVID-19 originated from Wuhan, China, it has now spread worldwide including to British Columbia. Cases in British Columbia are being closely managed.

How is coronavirus transmitted?

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 a 2-metre distance away from a person who is sick, to reduce breathing in droplets when they cough or sneeze.

What are the symptoms?

Common symptoms for COVID-19 include

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Sneezing

The incubation period is the time from when a person is first exposed until symptoms appear. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. This is the longest known infectious period for this disease.

If you are unsure about your symptoms or have questions or concerns, contact HealthLinkBC (**8-1-1**) at any time.

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.

When seeing a health care provider, please tell them

- Your symptoms
- Where you have been travelling or living

- If you had direct contact with animals (for example, if you visited a live animal market)
- If you had close contact with a sick person, especially if they had a fever, cough or difficulty breathing

How can I prevent getting infected?

The most important thing you can do to prevent infection is to wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face, eyes, nose or mouth. You can also practice respiratory etiquette and social distancing.

To help reduce your risk of infection

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Using soap and water is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infection
- If a sink is not available, alcohol based hand rubs (ABHR) can be used to clean your hands as long as they are not visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, use a wipe and then ABHR to effectively clean them
- Do not touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands
- Follow good respiratory etiquette by covering your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow when you sneeze or cough
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Do not share food, drinks, utensils, etc.
- Avoid crowded public spaces and places. Examples include mass gatherings, such as concerts and sporting events. Examples do not include hospitals (for healthcare workers) and schools
- Maintain social distancing by keeping at least a 2-metre distance between yourself and others
- Avoid shaking hands

For more information on proper hand washing see:

- [Hand Washing: Help Stop the Spread of Germs \(HealthLinkBC File #85\)](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Reduce the spread of COVID-19: Wash your hands \(PDF 298KB\)](#)

Should I wear a mask?

- Only wear a mask if you are ill with COVID-19 symptoms (especially coughing) or looking after someone who may have COVID-19
- A disposable face mask can only be used once
- It may be less effective to wear a mask if you are not sick

How is the test done for COVID-19?

The BCCDC Public Health Laboratory (PHL) has developed laboratory guidance for COVID-19 diagnostic testing. If your health care provider thinks you may have the new coronavirus, they will arrange for testing.

Testing may be available for those with symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) and history of travel or have had close physical and prolonged contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19.

The test for COVID-19 is done by Nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs or throat swabs.

Is there a treatment for COVID-19?

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Many of the symptoms can be managed with home treatment such as drinking plenty of fluids, rest and using a humidifier or hot shower to ease a cough or sore throat. Most people recover

from coronaviruses on their own. For people who develop a more serious illness, supportive care in or out of hospital may be needed.

For more information on what you can do if you have symptoms, see:

- [Colds](#)
- [Fever or Chills, Age 12 and Older](#)
- [Fever or Chills, Age 11 & Younger](#)
- [Respiratory Problems, Age 11 and Younger](#)
- [Respiratory Problems, Age 12 and Older](#)

Is there a vaccine for a COVID-19?

When a disease is new such as COVID-19, there is no vaccine until one is developed. Possible vaccines are under investigation. It can take time to develop a new vaccine.

What is self-monitoring and self-isolation?

Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring is monitoring for symptoms such as fever, cough and difficulty breathing for 14 days. During this time, monitor your own health and the health of your children and close contacts that are older or chronically ill. Individuals who are self-monitoring are allowed to attend work and school and participate in regular activities.

You can actively self-monitor by taking your temperature twice a day, in the morning and at nighttime, using a digital thermometer by mouth (oral). If you take fever-reducing medications such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) and ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) the temperature should be recorded at least 4 hours after the last dose.

If you start having symptoms of COVID-19, you need to begin self-isolation:

- Isolate yourself from others as quickly as possible
- Call your health care professional or contact HealthLinkBC (**8-1-1**)
- Describe your symptoms and travel history. They will provide advice on what you should do

Self-Isolation

Self-isolation means staying home and limiting your contact with others for 14 days. This helps to lower the chance of spreading the disease because symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. During this 14 day incubation period, there is a small chance you can spread germs even though you don't feel sick. This is why it is important for people at risk of having been exposed to the illness are asked to self-isolate.

To limit contact with others, you should

- Stay home
- Avoid those who have chronic conditions, compromised immune systems and older adults
- Avoid having visitors to your home
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds
- Cover your mouth and nose with your arm when coughing or sneezing

For more information on self-isolation see:

- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): How to isolate at home when you have COVID-19 \(PDF 344KB\)](#)

Plan ahead and prepare for what you will do if you or a family member becomes sick and needs care.

For more information on being prepared see:

- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Be prepared \(COVID-19\)](#)

For more useful resources see:

- [Public Health Agency of Canada: About coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) \(PDF 575KB\)](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Public Health Agency of Canada: How to care for a person with COVID-19 at home: Advice for caregivers \(PDF 345KB\)](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada: Vulnerable populations and COVID-19 \(PDF 335KB\)](#)

Common Questions about COVID-19

For more answers to some of the most common questions about coronavirus see:

- [BC Cancer Agency: COVID-19 and Cancer Treatments - Information for Patients](#)
- [BCCDC: Frequently Asked Questions on New Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) for Children and Students \(PDF 570KB\)](#)
- [BCCDC: Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Fraser Health Authority: Coronavirus Questions - General Public](#)
- [Government of Canada: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health Authority: Information on Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [World Health Organization: Q&A on Coronaviruses \(COVID-19\)](#)

Useful Websites

BC Centre for Disease Control

BCCDC provides health promotion and prevention services, and diagnostic and treatment services to reduce communicable and chronic disease, preventable injury and environmental health risks. BCCDC also provides analytical and policy support to government and health authorities.

- [BCCDC: 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID 19 \) B.C. public health guidance for schools and childcare programs \(PDF 494KB\)](#)
- [BCCDC: Recommendations to Post Secondary Institutions Regarding 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID 19\) \(PDF 260KB\)](#)
- General Public: [Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Health Professionals: [Novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- News and Updates: [Latest case counts on novel coronavirus](#)

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

The Public Health Agency of Canada promotes health, prevents and controls chronic diseases and injuries and infectious diseases. The PHAC responds to public health emergencies. For more information about COVID-19, including travel advisories, see:

- [Government of Canada: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Outbreak update](#)
- [Government of Canada: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel advice](#)
- [Government of Canada: Travel health notices](#)

World Health Organization (WHO)

The World Health Organization provides leadership on global health matters. The WHO monitors and assesses health issues such as COVID-19, provides technical support to countries and sets health standards. For more information about 2019-nCoV, see:

- [WHO: Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)
- [WHO: Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#)

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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