



Post-Secondary Public Health Guidance

UPDATED: September 2, 2022

Key Messages

- This document outlines the current prevention measures recommended by public health for post-secondary institutions in B.C. to reduce the risk of communicable diseases, including COVID-19, on campus.
- In-person educational settings have been demonstrated to be lower-risk settings for COVID-19 transmission, particularly in the context of a highly immunized population.
- Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 on campus. Everyone eligible is strongly encouraged to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and receive recommended booster doses.
- COVID-19 is now managed more like other common respiratory illnesses as we have a vaccine that substantially decreases the risk of severe illness.
- Post-Secondary institutions must continue to follow communicable disease guidance.
- Given the low-risk nature of in-class learning and a highly immunized population, on-campus instruction and activities can be at normal capacity.
- Young people have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Enabling them to engage in regular on-campus activities is a priority for pandemic recovery.

Introduction

This document outlines the current prevention measures recommended by public health for post-secondary institutions in B.C. to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Both public and private post-secondary institutions, post-secondary sector stakeholders and the public can utilize these Guidelines.

The Guidelines were developed by a team of experts from B.C.'s post-secondary sector, the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, regional health authorities and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

In B.C., most transmission of COVID-19 occurs in households or at informal social gatherings. In educational and other comparable settings, including those with teaching, learning, research, and student development activities, COVID-19 transmission is uncommon. Young people [have been disproportionately affected](#) by the pandemic, in terms of mental health, social connection and educational impacts. Enabling them to engage in regular learning, recreational, and social activities is needed for pandemic recovery. While COVID-19 will continue to circulate for many years, in a highly immunized population like B.C., COVID-19 prevention needs to be balanced with recovery efforts.



The prevention measures detailed in this document have been very effective at reducing the spread of COVID-19 in a wide variety of settings across B.C. and will support successful and low-risk on-campus activities. Prior to implementing measures in addition to those outlined below, consult with your local Medical Health Officer to maximize benefits and avoid harms.

Post-secondary institutions are encouraged to incorporate these recommended prevention measures, recognizing this is an evolving situation and that Public Health Orders or guidance will periodically adapt to changing disease epidemiology as necessary. Public Health remains committed to supporting the post-secondary sector, including faculty, staff, and students to engage in educational and research activities that are critical to the community and to society.

Personal Measures

COVID-19 is now managed more like other common respiratory illnesses as we have a vaccine that substantially decreases the risk of severe illness. This means that if you develop symptoms, please stay home until you are well enough to participate in usual activities or call 8-1-1 to determine if you should seek additional medical attention or treatment when you are unwell.

Stay Home When Sick: Ensure students, faculty and staff are aware they should stay at home until well enough to resume regular activities. Those living on campus should follow the same guidance as those living in the community. Students staying in campus housing who are sick should limit non-essential, prolonged face-to-face interactions with others during their isolation period. Students can continue to access common areas when necessary. Masks can reduce the risk of transmission of respiratory pathogens when face-to-face interaction is essential (e.g. obtaining food in dining facilities). Detailed guidance on [mask use](#) and [managing your illness](#), including while living with others, is available on the BCCDC website.

Get Tested When Recommended: Encourage students faculty and staff to use the [BC Self-Assessment Tool](#) app and the BCCDC [When to Get Tested](#) resource.

Hand Hygiene: Enable regular opportunities for hand hygiene, including placing hand sanitizer stations at the entrances/exits to public indoor spaces, especially in eating establishments and common areas.

Vaccination

Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of serious illness from COVID-19. A primary series of vaccination provides [effective protection](#) against serious illness from COVID-19, including [variants of concern](#). A booster dose enhances protection. Vaccines are available to all faculty, students, and staff, including international students and their families.



Post-secondary institutions can work with public health to ensure vaccination opportunities remain accessible, as well as promote information on [how to get vaccinated](#). The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) has specific information on getting vaccinated for [students arriving in B.C.](#) from within and outside of Canada.

People vaccinated outside of B.C. can upload their COVID-19 vaccination records to www.immunizationrecord.gov.bc.ca. This requires a B.C. [Personal Health Number](#), which can be obtained by contacting Service BC at 1-833-838-2323. Service BC is available seven days a week, 7am to 7pm.

Some experiential learning placements (including practicum, clinical, and co-op placements) may require students to be vaccinated in line with practices for other employees. This currently includes health sciences students working in certain health care settings by Order of the Provincial Health Officer. Post-secondary institutions should share information with students and affected employees about vaccine requirements associated with their academic programs.

Self-assessment, Testing, and Treatment

Self-Assessment: Students, staff, and faculty can self-assess their symptoms and determine need for testing. It is available [online as well as an app](#). Guidance is also available by calling 811.

Testing: Testing is available to eligible student, faculty or staff in BC based on the BCCDC testing guidance. Share guidance on [when to get tested](#) with the campus community. Testing locations are available on Regional Health Authority websites. Public health does not recommend routine asymptomatic testing.

Resources to help faculty, staff, and student understand test results and determine next steps are available on the [BCCDC website](#). Those who have [symptoms](#) consistent with COVID-19 and are not tested are advised to stay home until they no longer have a fever and feel well enough to return to their usual activities. Rapid antigen tests are widely available for those who wish to use them, but are not required for in-person campus operations.

Treatment: Treatment options for those who are at high risk of severe disease are available, and more pharmaceutical interventions are expected to become available. For more information, see [BCCDC website](#) or consult your health care provider.

Administrator Role: Post-secondary institutions are not responsible for contact tracing, and should not provide notifications to faculty, staff or students about potential or confirmed communicable diseases cases (including COVID-19) unless requested to do so by the local Medical Health Officer.

Should faculty, staff or students disclose that they have tested positive for COVID-19 or bring forward concerns related to unconfirmed cases on campus, administrators may consider the following key messages if they determine the need to address their campus community:

- We continue to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of our students, faculty and staff. Effective prevention measures are in place across campus to prevent COVID-19 from spreading.



- In-person educational settings are low-risk settings for COVID-19, particularly in the context of a highly immunized population.
- In most cases, public health notifications to the campus community will not be required.
- Please do not notify faculty, staff or students about potential or confirmed communicable disease cases (including COVID-19) unless requested to do so by the local Medical Health Officer.
- In the interim, continue to do your daily health checks and follow all of the prevention measures in the [communicable disease guidance](#).
- [Getting vaccinated](#) is the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Provincial Health Officer Orders

Post-secondary institutions must follow any applicable Provincial Health Officer Orders. Full details on Orders are available from the [Provincial Health Officer](#).

Post-secondary Institution Housing COVID-19 Preventive Measures: Those living on-campus are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated with all the recommended doses.

Gatherings & Events: There are no restrictions, including restaurants, pubs, bars, and nightclubs.

Proof of vaccination: Use of the BC Vaccine Card is limited to specific settings, such as long term care. It is generally not required in post secondary institutions.

COVID-19 Safety Plans: Workplaces and organizations (including in post-secondary institutions) in BC are no longer required to maintain COVID-19 safety plans. Post-Secondary institutions must continue to follow [communicable disease guidance](#).

Face Coverings: Public Health will continue to be the official source of requirements or guidance on the use of face coverings in the post-secondary sector. Public health orders do not require face coverings in public spaces, including in post-secondary classrooms, student housing facilities, or work spaces. The use of face coverings is a personal choice. A mask must be worn in all health care settings, including vaccine clinics, student health centres and hospitals. More detailed information about various types of masks and how to use them is available on the [BCCDC website](#).

Regional Recommendations & Orders: Medical Health Officers can issue local public health Orders or recommendations for additional prevention measures beyond this guidance for post-secondary institutions within their regional health authority. These may be issued during times of increased community transmission of COVID-19, and within communities with low vaccination uptake. They are based on local epidemiology and are proportional to risk.



Environmental Measures

Ventilation: Continue to ensure that all mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated and maintained in accordance with WorkSafeBC requirements and ASHRAE Standards for indoor air quality, and that they are working properly. Open windows when the weather permits if it doesn't impact the functioning of the ventilation systems.

Cleaning & Disinfection: There are no COVID-19 specific cleaning requirements. Clean and disinfect educational spaces as per usual protocols.

Administrative Measures

Engaging with First Nations and Indigenous Communities: Institutions should continue to work collaboratively with local First Nations and Indigenous community partners to ensure that the health and safety of Indigenous learners and communities are considered.

COVID-19 specific administrative measures are no longer required.

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