Quick Facts about 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

British Columbia has declared a state of emergency and a public health emergency. Public health officials in the province are closely monitoring the situation as it evolves and will continue to notify the public as response measures change in B.C.

If you have non-medical question about COVID-19, please call 1-888-COVID19. You can get access to support and resources from the provincial and federal governments by calling this number. You can reach service representatives seven days a week, from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., and information is available in more than 110 languages.

For more information and latest updates on novel coronavirus (COVID-19), follow the BC Centre for Disease Control on Twitter @CDCofBC or visit the website: [http://www.bccdc.ca/covid19](http://www.bccdc.ca/covid19). For the latest B.C. government statement on COVID-19, visit B.C. Gov News- Ministry of Health: [https://news.gov.bc.ca/ministries/health](https://news.gov.bc.ca/ministries/health)


Multiple supports are available for those impacted by COVID-19. For more information visit: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support?utm_campaign=20200319_GCPE_AM_COVID_4_NOTIFICATION_BCGOV_BCGOV_EN_BC__NOTIFICATION](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support?utm_campaign=20200319_GCPE_AM_COVID_4_NOTIFICATION_BCGOV_BCGOV_EN_BC__NOTIFICATION)

For mental health and anxiety support visit: www.bouncebackbc.ca or [www.anxietycanada.com](http://www.anxietycanada.com)

For provincial health officer orders, notices and guidance, visit: [www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance](http://www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance)

Testing

Anyone who is concerned they may have been exposed to, or are experiencing symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat or sneezing) of, the coronavirus should use the BC COVID-19 symptom and self-assessment tool online at: [https://covid19.thrive.health/](https://covid19.thrive.health/) to determine if they need to be tested. After doing the assessment, if you still have questions, contact your health-care provider or call 8-1-1 for guidance. If the symptoms are severe such as shortness of breath or chest pain, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency department.

Safe testing may be available at different health-care settings, including your doctor’s office, walk-in clinic, collection centre or urgent and primary care centre.

Any British Columbian who is exhibiting cold, influenza or COVID-like symptoms can be assessed for and get a COVID-19 test from a physician, nurse practitioner, local community collection centre. Unless a test is recommended by a medical health officer or a health-care provider, an individual that has no symptoms, even if they are a contact of a confirmed case or a returning traveler, do not require a test.
Call ahead to the health-care facility you are planning to visit so they can be prepared to take precautions. In an emergency, describe your symptoms, travel history and any sick contacts when you first arrive at the facility so that appropriate precautions can be taken.

More information on community collection centre locations throughout the province is available here: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing

Contact tracing

On August 12, the B.C. Government announced it will hire approximately 500 additional health professionals to increase contact tracing around British Columbia, helping keep communities safe as it continues its COVID-19 restart plan. For more information, visit, https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2020PREM0044-001510

Contact tracing is an important tool to help diagnose people who may have COVID-19 sooner and prevent the virus from spreading in your community.

If you are a contact of a confirmed case, a member of the public health team will contact you to let you know you may have been exposed. If you have symptoms, you will be sent for testing. If you do not have symptoms, you will be asked to self-isolate so that if you develop COVID-19, you won’t spread it to others in the community.

If you get sick, you can help by telling public health about the people you’ve spent time with, meaning your contacts.

For more information about contact tracing, visit, http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation/contact-tracing

Self-isolation

Self-isolation means staying home and avoiding situations where you could come in contact with others.

People arriving in Canada from international travel must stay home, self-isolate for 14 days, monitor themselves and their children closely for symptoms of illness. Spot checks will be conducted by the Government of Canada to verify compliance. In addition to self-isolating for 14 days, all international travellers returning to B.C. are required by law to complete a self-isolation plan, which must be reviewed by provincial government officials before travellers can return home. For more information, visit, https://gov.bc.ca/returningtravellers.

If you develop symptoms, you should get tested for COVID-19. If you are unsure, you can use the self-assessment tool at https://covid19.thrive.health/ to help determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. Ensure that you isolate immediately and avoid contact with others. You will need to continue to self-isolate while you wait for your test results. This means staying away from others as much as possible.
After doing the self-assessment, if you still have questions, contact your health-care provider or call 8-1-1 for guidance. If the symptoms are severe such as shortness of breath or chest pain, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency department.

For more information on how to self-isolate, visit: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing-isolation

**Staying safe**

B.C.’s progress in the fight against COVID-19 is a direct result of the sacrifices and decisions that everyone has made. To continue to protect seniors and at-risk people and ensure that B.C.’s health-care system can respond to this dangerous virus, everyone must keep doing its part – at home, in the community and at work.

In addition to physical distancing, the most important thing you can do to prevent infection is to:

- Only get together with your immediate household and your ‘safe six.’ It means a group of six friends or extended family members that is consistent for everyone involved.
- Staying at home and away from others if you have cold or flu-like symptoms, including coughing, sneezing, runny nose, sore throat and fatigue.
- If you are at greater risk (over the age of 60 or with underlying medical conditions), be informed of your risk, think through your risk tolerance and take extra precautions.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
- If a sink is not available, alcohol-based hand rubs 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 the alcohol-based hand rubs to effectively clean them.
- Do not touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover 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.
- Wear a non-medical mask in all indoor public spaces or if you are in a high-traffic area or among many people outside of your household. Any mask, no matter how efficient at filtration or how good the seal, will have minimal effect if it is not used together with other preventive measures, such as frequent hand washing, physical distancing and not touching your face.

**What to do if you are sick**

If you develop cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms, use the self-assessment tool at https://covid19.thrive.health/ to help determine if you need further assessment for COVID-19 testing by a physician, nurse or at a local collection centre.

B.C.’s Restart Plan

On May 6, the B.C. Government presented its Restart Plan. B.C.’s restart will be a careful, step-by-step process to ensure all of our combined efforts and sacrifices are not squandered.

Organizations are asked to develop enhanced protocols aligned with the Public Health and Safety Guidelines. A cross-ministry committee of deputy ministers will monitor the process and ensure overall alignment with the Public Health and Safety Guidelines and WorkSafeBC. The provincial health officer will continue to provide input and advice as needed throughout the review process.

By following the guidance of the provincial health officer, the province is now ready to safely and gradually transition into Phase 3 of B.C.’s four-phase Restart Plan.

Phase 3 allows for more types of activities, but how people interact with each other does not change. Transitioning to Phase 3 doesn’t mean people can stop doing the things that prevent COVID-19 transmission, like physical distancing, only gathering in small groups, frequent handwashing and staying home when sick.

Like other activities during B.C.’s COVID-19 pandemic, summer holidays and travel will be different this year. British Columbians should be respectful of the communities they travel to and be safe as they enjoy the many beautiful locations across the province.

When going on the road this summer, bring the rules of home with you and follow Dr. Bonnie Henry’s Travel Manners: check before you go, fewer faces in bigger spaces, if sick stay home, wash your hands, keep a safe physical distance, come prepared and bring supplies and respect all travel advisories.

For more information on the Restart Plan and when businesses will open, visit, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan

Information about masks

Facemasks can be worn to help protect those around you and should be worn by people who are sick.

Masks can have a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19, especially for health-care providers and for people that have COVID-19. This is because masks act as a barrier and help stop the spread of droplets from your mouth and nose when you are talking, laughing, yelling, singing, coughing, or sneezing.

To be effective, masks must be worn properly and used together with other preventive measures such as frequent hand washing and physical distancing and not touching the face. Using only a mask is not enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
Effective October 26, the expectation is that people will wear masks in all indoor public spaces. As part of this, businesses are asked to review their COVID-19 safety plans with this in mind. If you are in a high-traffic area or among many people outside of your household while at work, a mask will help to protect you and those around you.

For guidance and more information on masks, visit, http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks

**Information for international travellers**

International visitors are not allowed to enter Canada, except diplomats and flight crews and immediate family members of Canadian citizens or permanent residents. As of March 21, the federal government has also announced a temporary restriction on all non-essential travel at the Canada-US border has been implemented.

Only essential traffic between Canada and U.S. is allowed: Canadians and Americans who need to cross the border to do essential work or for other urgent reasons are allowed to travel, this includes trucking, which allows food, fuel and medicine to move between Canada and the U.S.

Unless you are exempt, all those returning to B.C. must self-isolate for 14 days, meaning do not go to work, stay at home and limit contact with others. All international travellers returning to B.C. are required by law to complete a self-isolation plan, which must be reviewed by provincial government officials before travellers can return home. They must also complete the federal ArriveCAN application prior to arrival or upon their return to B.C. For more information, visit, https://gov.bc.ca/returningtravellers.

While in self-isolation, monitor yourself and your children closely for symptoms similar to the flu or common cold such as coughing, sneezing, sore throat, fever or difficulty breathing. If any symptoms arise, use the BC COVID-19 symptom and self-assessment tool online at: https://covid19.thrive.health/ to determine if you need to be tested.

Incoming travellers are screened at all borders – land, sea and air. Please go to the public health agency of Canada’s website for more information: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/canadas-reponse.html#acb

For more information on the federal government’s actions on Canadian borders, please visit their website at: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/canadas-reponse.html#acb

**Public events and gatherings**

The provincial health officer encourages everyone to practice physical distancing to limit transmission of COVID-19. These efforts are not forever but are important now. You can still shop for groceries and do activities where you can maintain physical distance with other people.
Effective March 16, the Ministry of Health and the provincial health officer have issued an order prohibiting gatherings of more than 50 people. This includes indoor and outdoor sporting events, conferences, meetings, religious gatherings, drive-ins or other similar events. This threshold has been selected, as it is much easier to maintain important physical distancing to prevent transmission of COVID-19.


Effective October 26, the Ministry of Health and the provincial health officer have issued an order limiting gatherings in private homes to no more than members of the immediate household, plus six others. This is a provincewide order that applies to all homes for all occasions.

In these private settings, everyone is encouraged to take measures to limit transmission of COVID-19 such as keeping groups small, maintaining physical distancing, staying at home if you feel unwell or have symptoms and frequent handwashing.

It is important that British Columbians respect the provincial health officer’s orders. These orders protect B.C.’s most vulnerable, health-care system and health-care workers – who are undertaking a tremendously difficult task right now. They are temporary measures that will have a positive long-term impact.

**Weddings**

Marriage commissioners can choose to proceed or not with weddings, as they see fit. Marriage commissioners may require further restrictions on the number of guests at wedding ceremonies to five people; the couple and two witnesses.

If social distancing is not being practiced, marriage commissioners may refuse to proceed until the ceremony can be managed in an appropriate manner. Large weddings should not be planned at this time.

For more information on weddings, visit, https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/life-events/marriage/marriage-commissioners

**Schools**

As COVID-19 spread, governments everywhere took action to reduce in-classroom learning. For most British Columbians with young children, this meant having to stay at home to look after their kids. An important step toward B.C.’s recovery is getting kids back into the classroom, so parents can get back into the workplace. All schools throughout the province reopened in September 2020.
Although COVID-19 has a low infection rate in children (ages 0 to 19), it is still important that schools follow public health principles like staying home when sick, socializing within learning groups and minimizing physical contact, practicing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and cleaning and disinfecting frequently.

For the latest information about education and K-12 schools for parents, students and school administrators, visit https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/covid-19-return-to-school (available in multiple languages).

For more information on guidelines about hand washing, cleaning and ideas about physical distancing in child care centres, visit, http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools/schools

Child-care settings

Child care centres can be operated safely by following public health principles like staying home when sick, encouraging physical distancing and minimizing physical contact, practicing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and frequent cleaning and disinfecting. COVID-19 has a very low infection rate in children and most children are not at high risk.

For more information, visit, http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools/child-care

Visits in long-term care homes

Residents can visit with one family member or friend.

General visitor protocols include:

- Do not visit if you are sick or have symptoms of COVID-19 or you are self-isolating because you may have been exposed or recently travelled
- Visits must be booked in advance
- Visitors will be screened for signs and symptoms of illness, including COVID-19, prior to every visit
- All visitors are required to bring and wear a mask
- Visitors must clean hands before and after visit
- Visits will take place in specific “visiting areas,” which will be organized by each residence
- Visitors should maintain a distance of two metres or two arm lengths from others
- Visits are not allowed if there is an active COVID-19 outbreak at the residence.

Friends and families should connect with the residence for specific instructions.