

# Public health principles for child care operators and staff

The risk of transmitting COVID-19 in child care settings is low, so staff and children can continue to attend child care settings based on [BC's Restart Plan](#). There are now fewer cases across BC and public health is actively identifying and isolating all new cases and their contacts. Below are four key actions to help prevent COVID-19 in child care settings. These do not replace other guidelines. Check [WorkSafeBC](#), [Childcare BC](#), the [FAQ resource for child care staff](#) and the [BCCDC website](#) for more details.

## How can child care settings and staff prevent the spread of COVID-19?

### Stay home/go home if you are sick

**Why?** Staying away from others if you are sick is one of the best ways to protect others from COVID-19.



**How?** All children and staff should stay home and [self-isolate](#) if they:

- Have any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, OR
- Travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days, OR
- Had close contact with a confirmed case or outbreak of COVID-19 and have been directed to self-isolate by public health.

Use the self-assessment tool at [bc.thrive.health](https://bc.thrive.health) or call 8-1-1 to assess symptoms and determine if testing is needed.

Staff should:

- Assess themselves daily for symptoms
- Encourage parents and caregivers to daily assess themselves and their child(ren) before bringing their child to the setting
- If a staff member or child shows symptoms while at the child care setting, send them home as soon as possible then disinfect objects they have touched.



## Encourage and role model physical distancing and minimize physical contact

**Why?** When you cough or sneeze, liquid droplets spread 1-2 metres away from you. You can reduce the risk of COVID-19 by keeping staff and other adults 2 metres apart whenever possible. Staying 2 metres apart is not always possible and is not expected at all times in child care settings.

**How?** Remember that children are at a low risk of getting COVID-19 or transmitting the virus. Focus on minimizing direct physical contact among young children, rather than on keeping them 2 metres apart. Staff and parents should keep a 2 metre distance from each other and other people's children whenever possible.

Develop practices that support these measures, like:

- No hugging or handshakes
- Drop-off/pick-up rules that minimize indoor congestion
- Put hand sanitizers in drop-off/pick-up area



## Clean high touch surfaces often

**Why?** If you touch your eyes, nose or mouth after touching a surface with the COVID-19 virus on it, you can get sick. Keeping surfaces clean helps prevent the spread of the virus.

**How?** Making surfaces safe involves three steps:

1. Remove visible dirt from common surfaces with soap and water.
2. Apply household or commercial disinfectants according to instructions
3. Let surfaces dry several minutes before you touch or put anything on them.

You can find more information on cleaning and disinfecting on the [BCCDC website](#).



## Practice proper hand washing and cover coughs and sneezes

**Why?** Proper hand washing destroys the virus on your hands. Safe coughing/sneezing prevents the spread of droplets.

**How?** Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Dry your hands with paper towels - do not use a hand dryer.

Can hand sanitizer be used? If soap and water are not available, [Health Canada approved alcohol-based hand sanitizer](#) can be applied to children under 6 with adult supervision. Please read the label carefully as [certain products are not to be used on children or by pregnant or breastfeeding staff](#). Hand sanitizer is not recommended for use on newborn or preterm infants.

If a child accidentally consumes any amount of hand sanitizer, call the BC Poison Control Centre: 1-800-567-8911.

Staff and children should cough or sneeze into their elbow, sleeve or a tissue. They should avoid touching their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands. Use kind reminders if people are forgetting to do this.



It is not recommended that children wear masks. Masks may be irritating for children and may lead to increased touching of their face and eyes. Wearing a mask is a personal choice for staff or older children and should be permitted.