Self-isolation for Travellers returning to Canada or exposure to a COVID-19 case

Review this handout if:

- You returned from travel outside of Canada. Unless you are exempt, all travellers returning to Canada are required under the Quarantine Act to self-monitor and self-isolate for 14 days. Travellers returning to B.C. must also submit a self-isolation plan for approval prior to their return or upon arrival.
- You were exposed to a COVID-19 case. Public exposures to COVID-19 are listed on the Government of Canada COVID-19 exposure locations and the BCCDC’s Public Exposures page.

What is self-isolation?
Self-isolation means that you need to stay home and avoid contact with others for 14 days. This applies, even if you don’t have symptoms. Go to self-isolation on the BCCDC website for more information.

What is self-monitoring?
Self-monitoring for COVID-19 means you pay attention to your health, and record daily your temperature and any COVID-19 compatible symptoms. Self-monitor daily for 14 days from when you returned to Canada or were last exposed to a COVID-19 case using the Daily self-monitoring form. The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses including the flu and common cold and can also include gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea and vomiting.

What if I develop symptoms or need medical care?

Mild Symptoms
- If you get sick, complete the BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool. The tool will help you understand what to do next or call 8-1-1 to speak with a nurse.
- If you have mild symptoms that can be managed at home (e.g., fever, cough, sneezing, or sore throat) continue self-isolating for at least 14 days (see When can I stop isolating? below).

Important! When seeking medical care, wear a medical face mask (surgical or procedural).
- If a medical mask is not available, use a non-medical mask or facial covering, e.g. homemade cloth mask, dust mask, bandana or if that is not readily available, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Do not use public transportation. This includes buses, taxis or ride-sharing where you would be in contact with others.

Worsening Symptoms
- If your symptoms worsen or if you are concerned, complete the Self-Assessment Tool again or call 8-1-1 any time.
- Examples include mild to moderate shortness of breath, inability to lie down because of difficulty breathing, any new chest pain and chronic health conditions that you are having difficulty managing because of difficulty breathing.
- If your symptoms worsen, it is important to seek medical help early. Please consult your family doctor or nurse practitioner. If you are unable to reach your regular care provider, seek care in a COVID-19 Assessment and Treatment Centre, Urgent & Primary Care Centre (UPCC) or Emergency Department. When going in person please call ahead and tell them your symptoms, and that you are self-isolating because of international travel or an exposure to a COVID-19 case.
Severe Symptoms

- These symptoms require immediate medical attention.
- Examples include severe difficulty breathing (e.g. struggling to breathe or speaking in single words), severe chest pain, having a very hard time waking up, or feeling confused or losing consciousness.
- Call 9-1-1 immediately, or go directly to your nearest emergency department. If possible, you or someone caring for you should call ahead and tell them your symptoms and you travelled outside of Canada or had contact with a COVID-19 case.

When can I stop isolating?

If you did NOT develop any symptoms, you can stop self-monitoring and self-isolating 14 days after international travel or your last exposure to a COVID-19 case.

If you developed respiratory symptoms, you can stop self-monitoring and self-isolating when:

A. At least 10 days have passed since your symptoms started OR 14 days from when you started self-isolating, whichever is longer; AND
B. You have no fever; AND
C. Any other symptoms (respiratory, gastrointestinal, and systemic) have gotten better. Coughing may go on for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-monitor and self-isolate.

Speak with a health care provider if you are unsure when to stop self-monitoring or self-isolating. You can call 8-1-1 any time to speak with a nurse.

How do I Self-isolate?

Avoid contact with others at your home

- It is better if those you live with can stay somewhere else, especially if they are seniors or people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, heart disease or weakened immune system). We know this may not be possible, so please see the advice below on how to limit your contact with others in your home.
- Stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom if possible.
  - Stay and sleep in a different room away from other people in your home as much as possible.
  - Make sure that any shared rooms have good airflow (e.g. open windows).
  - Use a different bathroom if available. Flush the toilet with the lid down as the virus may be in poop (feces).

Keep a physical distance

- If you are in a room with other people, keep a physical distance of at least two metres apart (about 6 feet or the width of a queen-size bed).
- If you cannot avoid being in the same room as others, wear a medical face mask (surgical or procedure) that covers your nose and mouth. If you cannot wear a mask, others in your home should a medical face mask (surgical or procedure) when in the same room. Read more about face masks below.

How to stop the spread of germs

Wear a face mask if in the same room as others

- When you are sick, a medical face mask (surgical or procedural) acts as a barrier and helps stop the tiny droplets from spreading when you cough or sneeze. Wearing a mask can help to prevent the spread of germs at home.
- If a medical mask is not available, use a non-medical mask or facial covering, e.g. homemade cloth mask, dust mask, bandana or if that is not readily available, cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- If your face mask gets wet or dirty, change it. Do not reuse masks. Throw used face masks in a lined trash can, and wash your hands with soap and water.
- Go to [www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks) for more information.
Wash your hands
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Hand washing is preferred over alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Only use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- It is best to dry your hands with a paper towel and throw it away into a lined trash can. If using your own cloth hand towel, no one else in the home should use it.

Cover your coughs and sneezes. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hand. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can, and wash your hands with soap and water.

Be careful when handling garbage. All used paper towel, masks and tissues should be put into a trash can lined with a plastic bag to make garbage disposal easier and safer. Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after handling garbage.

Laundry. Laundry should be placed in a laundry basket with a plastic liner. Use regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C) in your washing machine and dry clothes well. Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after handling laundry.

Shared items. Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with the person who is sick. Do not share cigarettes or any other items that are put in your mouth. After use, these items should be washed with soap or detergent in warm water. No special soap is needed and you can use the dishwasher.

Clean all high touch surfaces
1. Water and detergent (e.g., liquid dishwashing soap) or common household cleaning wipes should be used. Apply firm pressure while cleaning. Surfaces should be cleaned at least once a day. Clean high touch surfaces that are touched often (e.g., counters, table tops, doorknobs, toilets, sinks, taps, etc.) at least twice a day.
2. Next, use a store bought disinfectant or diluted bleach solution, one-part bleach to 50 parts water (20ml of bleach to 1 litre of water), and allow the surface to remain wet for one minute.

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