COVID-19 & Children with Medical Complexity Information Guide

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This guidance is intended for families with children with medical complexity and the teams who support them, and is based on known evidence as of November 10, 2020.

Document created and reviewed by representatives from:

- BC Children’s Hospital (Complex Care, Biochemical diseases, Respirology, Neurology, Interventional Radiology (IR), Infectious Diseases)
- Sunny Hill Neuromotor
- Canuck Place
- Community pediatricians
Does your child have medical complexity? Children with medical complexity have the following:

- Chronic condition(s) that affect multiple parts of the body requiring ongoing management
- Dependence on technology for daily living (e.g., feeding tube)
- Increased need for health-care resources (e.g., multiple specialists)
- Families who need support for the care of children with medical complexity (e.g. At Home Program)


Where to find COVID-19 Information for Families of children with medical complexity:
The best source of up-to-date information on novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in British Columbia is the BCCDC website: [www.bccdc.ca](http://www.bccdc.ca).

Emergency plans: We recommend that you have a plan in case of emergencies. For example, what to do if the main caregiver for your child becomes ill. The MyBooklet BC can be a good resource to have and update regularly as part of your plan.

Family Support Resources:
The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect everyone in various ways. This can be a difficult time for especially for families with children with medical complexity. In addition to these medical guidelines, there are also other resources and supports at schools and/or in your community that may be helpful for your family. These include:

- [Family Support Institute of BC](http://www.fsiabc.ca/)
- [Rare Disease Foundation](http://www.rarediseases.org/)
- [CanChild](http://www.canchild.ca/)
- A Child and Youth with Special Needs (CYSN) social worker, if your child is part of the [At Home Program](http://www.athomeprogram.bc.ca/)
- A family support worker, if your child is part of a [local centre for development](http://www.bccdc.ca/)
- An affiliated social worker, if your child is part of a multi-disciplinary program at BC Children’s Hospital (BCCH)-
- [Anxiety Canada: Coping with COVID-19](http://www.anxietycanada.com)
- [Kelty Mental Health](http://www.keltymentalhealth.org/)
- Local faith group and/or community
- School teams
- Local neighbourhood houses or community centres
COVID-19 in children with medical complexity

- During the first six months of the COVID-19 pandemic in B.C., children with medical complexity have had similar rates of infection as children without chronic conditions (which was less than that of adults).

Children with medical complexity and school

- **Should children with medical complexity attend school?** Every child has a right to education during the pandemic. Whether your child attends school is a personal decision along with specialist’s advice. The risks of sending your child to school are relatively low at this time in B.C. There are benefits of sending your child to school including socialization, ability for parents to work, access to specialized school services and equipment. If you sent your child to school during influenza season in previous years, it is reasonable that they attend this year. We advocate for all parties involved to collaborate in these children receiving education and supports during the pandemic (e.g. therapy services). More information regarding school is available [here](#).

- **Direct school nursing hours for children with medical complexity not attending school in person:** According to Nursing Support Services, direct nursing hours at school for children who also have direct nursing hours at home are now transferrable to the home during school hours. This does not apply for children who only have nursing hours at home nor to children who only have delegated nursing hours at school.

- **Resources for children:** visit the [Canuck Place School Vancouver School Board blog](https://blogs.vsb.bc.ca/cpch/category/back-to-school-2020/)

COVID-19 testing for children with medical complexity

- **How:** Children with medical complexity most likely will not be able to do the mouth rinse and gargle method due to the coordination required. Refer to BCCDC’s website for more details: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/children-youth](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/children-youth)

- **Where:** It is best for children with medical complexity to get their testing done in the emergency department* as these children can get ill from any viral illness and testing centres do not have capacity to assess and support them. Some centres also have the capacity to do the testing at specialist pediatric assessment centres attached to the hospital ward. Often a local general pediatrician is available to support these centres if these children require testing.

  *Please see “Urgent visits to the emergency department” section below

- **Who:** You can use the online, B.C. self-assessment tool [https://bc.thrive.health/](https://bc.thrive.health/) to determine if your child need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. You can also call the provincial health line 8-1-1 to receive advice on whether your child needs further assessment by a health-care provider.

Influenza (flu) and other immunizations

- Influenza (flu) immunization is recommended for children with medical complexity and their family members

- BCCDC recommends that children with medical complexity should be up to date on their routine childhood immunizations unless they have been advised not to immunize by a health professional.
For children who are at high risk of respiratory illnesses, pneumococcal polysaccharide (Pneu-P-23 vaccine) immunization is also recommended for children age two and then one booster five years later. This is free for those who meet the criteria at any public health clinic or pharmacy. Please see visit HealthLink BC’s website for more information: [https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/pneumococcal-polysaccharide-vaccine](https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/pneumococcal-polysaccharide-vaccine)

BCCH Family Immunization Clinic is available to book appointments for your child and family [http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/clinics/family-immunization](http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/clinics/family-immunization)

Your local public health units are another place that children can receive immunizations.

**Medical appointments - How many people can accompany your child?**

- In general, community-based clinics will have a COVID-19 Safety Plan to keep everyone safe. Please check with your child’s clinic and discuss beforehand if special arrangements are needed for your family.
- At BCCH, clinic visits are limited to one adult caregiver for each patient.
  - Exceptions can be requested when booking the appointment if you need more than one person to accompany your child for their appointment.
  - Most appointments are done virtually or by phone. When a physical exam or in person visit are required, this is to occur at BCCH.
  - Up to date information is on this webpage: [http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/your-visit/planning-your-visit](http://www.bcchildrens.ca/our-services/your-visit/planning-your-visit)

**Urgent visits to the emergency department or local urgent and primary care centre**

- If you are concerned your child may have COVID-19 and they require:
  - assessment in the emergency department/urgent care centre and
  - aerosol generating procedures (nebulizer, continuous positive airway pressure, bilevel positive airway pressure),
- It is advised that you call your health-care professional who can call ahead to your local emergency department/urgent and primary care centre to notify of your arrival.
- Most emergency departments allow only one adult caregiver with the child. Exceptions may be made on request.

**Unplanned/urgent gastrojejunostomy (GJ) tube changes:**

For GJ malfunction that requires an unplanned change of the GJ tube:

- **At BCCH:**
  - Weekdays between 7:30am-3:30pm, families to call the interventional radiology booking clerk at 604-875-2329 ext. 3.
  - After-hours or on weekends, please go to the BCCH emergency department.
- **For other locations:**
  - Arrange with your primary care professional or pediatrician for the best plan.
If you or your child has symptoms of COVID-19 or have been told by public health to self-isolate because of contact with a person with COVID-19, please inform the booking clerk when you speak to them. This allows them to fix the GJ tube in a way that is safe for everyone.