



COVID-19 Information for Families of Children with Medical Complexity

Updated: June 15, 2020

The best source of up-to-date information on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in British Columbia is the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC): www.bccdc.ca.

This document provides answers to additional questions for families of children with medical complexity. BC Children's Hospital also has a webpage www.bcchildrens.ca/covid19 for people with appointments at the hospital which they update regularly.

Does your child have medical complexity?

Your child has medical complexity if they:

- Have special healthcare needs, like medical care and specialized therapy
- Have one or more medical conditions that could be lifelong (also called **chronic conditions**)
- Use medical technology (devices), like a feeding tube, tracheostomy tube, or wheelchair, in daily life
- Use health-care services more often than most children¹

Examples of medical complexity are:

- Neurologic impairments or challenges
- Congenital abnormalities (birth defects)
- Ongoing special needs after cancer

Q1. Who should I contact about COVID-19 and my child?

If your child has medical complexity and you have concerns about COVID-19, contact your health care provider in the community, your local hospital or BC Children's Hospital (BCCH). Most teams at BCCH have 24/7 coverage and can provide advice. If your child does not have a team at BC Children's, please contact your community team or pediatrician.

Q2. Should my child go to their appointment at a hospital or clinic?

It is important that your child receive ongoing medical care for their chronic conditions.

Check with your child's health care provider to find out if they have an **essential appointment**. An essential appointment is time-sensitive and your child's health may get worse if they do not go to this appointment in person.

- **For essential appointments:** Call your child's clinic before the appointment. Tell the clinic about your child's current state and any possible symptoms.
- **For non-essential appointments:** Many healthcare providers in BC are moving appointments to virtual formats. Please check with your child's health care provider to discuss available options. If your appointment is with a BCCH clinic, the clinic will contact you. BCCH is moving non-essential appointments to a virtual format. Your child's appointment may happen on the phone, or by home videoconferencing.

¹ Cohen, E., Kuo, D. Z., Agrawal, R., Berry, J. G., Bhagat, S. K., Simon, T. D., & Srivastava, R. (2011). Children with medical complexity: an emerging population for clinical and research initiatives. *Pediatrics*, 127(3), 529-538.





Q3. What if my child needs urgent or emergency care?

If you have a child with medical complexity, you often know when your child needs urgent medical care. Rely on your experience. If it is an emergency, call 9-1-1. If you are comfortable bringing your child to an Emergency Department (ED):

1. Call your child's health care provider in the community or at BCCH. Tell them that you are going to the ED.
2. Your child's health care providers will call the ED with information about your child. The ED will prepare to see your child without putting them or others at risk.
3. Some kinds of care, like nebulization, suctioning, and non-invasive ventilation, may spread viruses. If your child requires these treatments, call the ED 30 minutes before you arrive to provide the ED with time to prepare for your visit.
4. Hospitals have the correct supplies and processes in place to keep you and your child safe during your visit: Please check the hospital's guidelines regarding family and visitor policy.

Q4. Can my child or family member be tested for COVID-19?

Use the COVID-19 Self-Assessment tool at bc.thrive.health to better understand if testing is needed. Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 can be tested. If you have questions call your primary clinic, your community pediatrician, or 8-1-1 to ask if your child or family member should be tested.

Q5. What if my child needs routine medical care?

Some children may need routine bloodwork or other medical tests due to their medically complex condition. Talk to the care provider who is ordering the test to see if it is essential.

If your child needs the test, call your local lab to see if you can make an appointment. This will reduce your time in the waiting room.

Q6. Should my child stay home?

At this time, we are recommending that everyone stay home as much as possible. If that is not possible, practice physical distancing - check the BC CDC website for updates. If you can't practice physical distancing, we advise people ages 2 and up wear a cloth mask. It is not safe to put a mask on a child under 2 years of age.

Q7. What should I do if my family gets quarantined?

Always make sure you have enough food and medical supplies for two weeks. This includes medicine, oxygen, wound care and feeds. Monitor food and supplies carefully.

Ask people outside your immediate family that can bring you groceries and supplies. Plan how you will get more supplies, if you need them.

Information on specific populations and clinical programs:

Home Tracheostomy and Ventilation (HTV) Program

- If your child has increased respiratory symptoms, please follow their escalation plan if they have one, or otherwise contact the HTV team or respiratory doctor on-call for advice.
- If you are coming to hospital for urgent care, please ensure you bring all equipment your child needs on a daily basis, including their ventilator, suction, medication and feeds, and be aware that wait times may be longer than usual.

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.





Coronavirus COVID-19

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- Please be aware that home nursing availability may fall due to the pandemic. You should have a back-up plan for how to care for your child, both day and night, in case of this event.

Metabolic/Biochemical Diseases Clinic

- Special Products office has confirmed that their supply chain for special products (formula) are normal. They will deliver formula to families, if needed. You can phone them or use email, whichever you are currently doing.

Common questions answered by

- BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) www.bccdc.ca/covid19
- HealthLink BC, call 8-1-1
- BC Children's Hospital www.bcchildrens.ca/covid19

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