



**BC Centre for Disease Control**  
An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

**Clinical Prevention Services  
Provincial Tuberculosis Services**

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## Tuberculosis and COVID-19

TB disease is not known to put people at higher risk of COVID-19 infection, but it may put you at risk of having more severe symptoms.

There are many ways people with TB can reduce their chance of getting COVID-19, which include physical distancing, good hand hygiene, safe social interactions and following all public health [recommendations](#) and [restrictions](#).

### Receiving care at our TB clinics

Please keep your scheduled TB clinic appointments. The TB clinics are very strict about infection prevention and control so please be reassured that they are taking great efforts to keep you and their staff safe. Also, our clinics offer virtual appointments by phone or computer whenever possible.

### People with active TB or those who are recovering

If you have had or are recovering from TB and have persistent symptoms of lung disease, you may be at risk for developing more severe symptoms if you acquire a respiratory infection, including COVID-19. Keep taking your TB treatment as prescribed. There is no clear evidence that active TB disease puts you at increased risk of COVID-19 infection, but we do know that people have worse health and treatment outcomes if their TB treatment is stopped or interrupted.

If you have fully recovered from TB and do not have any other medical conditions that could put you at risk for severe outcomes of COVID-19, then your risk may be the same as the general population of similar age.

It is recommended that people who have had TB, especially those who required lung surgery, or have post-TB lung disease closely follow public health [recommendations](#). Other important steps to support good lung health and prevent poor outcomes include stopping tobacco, vaping, or e-cigarette use.

### People with latent TB infection

Currently, there is no evidence to suggest that latent TB infection (LTBI) alone puts you at higher risk of getting COVID-19. If you are generally in good health, it is unlikely that LTBI influences the symptoms associated with COVID-19.

## TB medication and COVID-19

The medications used to treat TB disease and TB infection are not used to treat COVID-19 patients. If you are on TB medication you should continue to take your medication as prescribed and continue with appointments, tests and medication refills as scheduled by your health care provider.

## COVID-19 Vaccination and TB Disease or Latent TB Infection Treatment

Nearly everyone will be able to safely receive the COVID-19 vaccine, although a very small number of people may need to avoid vaccination due to [severe allergies](#) to parts of the vaccine.

- If you are taking treatment for TB disease or latent TB infection, it is safe to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it is [offered to you](#).
- If you are not tolerating your TB treatment, you should wait until your treatment is stable before receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. It is not a safety concern, but it is important to separate the side effects of your TB treatment from a potential side effect of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- At this time, TB Services is not providing the COVID-19 vaccine to patients.

BC's COVID-19 Immunization Plan will happen in four phases. The focus at first is to protect those most likely to experience severe illness. Find more information about getting a COVID-19 vaccine and other health considerations on the [BCCDC COVID-19 vaccine page](#).

## BCG vaccination and COVID-19

There is no evidence that the Bacille Calmette-Guérin vaccine (BCG) (a vaccine that has been used to protect children from severe cases of TB) protects people from acquiring COVID-19. Currently, there are [clinical trials](#) to study this question, but at this time the World Health Organization (WHO) does NOT recommend the use of BCG vaccination to prevent or cure COVID-19. Also, people with a history of BCG vaccination should not feel they are protected from acquiring COVID-19 disease. Visit the [WHO website](#) for more information.

## Comparison of TB and COVID-19

The chart below provides a comparison of the two diseases. Visit the BCCDC website for further information on [TB symptoms](#) and [COVID-19 symptoms](#). If you have symptoms of COVID-19 complete the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#). If you have symptoms of TB, contact your health care provider or local [Public Health Unit](#).

Comparison of TB and COVID-19	Tuberculosis	COVID-19
Symptoms	Cough, often productive; bloody sputum, shortness of breath, fever, unexplained weight loss, night sweats, feeling very tired	Key symptoms include fever or chills, cough, loss of sense of smell or taste, difficulty breathing. Other symptoms may include sore throat, headache, body aches, extreme fatigue or tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea
How it is spread	The TB germ is found in very small droplets that can remain in the air for several hours after someone with lung TB disease coughs, sneezes, shouts or sings. Good air ventilation and sunlight decreases the amount of TB germs in the air.	The coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is found inside droplets released by people who have the infection when they talk, cough, sneeze, shout or sing. Droplets can range in size and a few large droplets or many small droplets can contain enough virus to infect another person. Large droplets are heavier and usually fall to the ground or surfaces within 2 meters. Smaller droplets are lighter and can remain in the air for a longer time, especially in poorly ventilated indoor spaces. The most common type of spread is from close contact with an infected person.
How it is diagnosed	Sputum tests for those with cough. Other samples depending on symptoms.	Nasal and/or throat swabs.  Saline gargle test.
Pathogen	<i>Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex</i>	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
Prevention	Taking TB preventive therapy for those with known contact to TB, prompt diagnosis and treatment of active TB, appropriate infection control measures to help limit transmission (eg. self-isolation while infectious, mask wearing).	Staying home if sick, physical distancing, mask wearing, well ventilated indoor spaces, hand hygiene, and immunization with COVID-19 vaccine.
Treatment	Antibiotics.	Supportive treatments (e.g. oxygen) and three specific treatments for hospitalized COVID-19 patients: Dexamethasone, Remdesivir and Tocilizumab. Many <a href="#">drug trials</a> are under way.
Vaccine	BCG has some protective effects, particularly for children.	Review the <a href="#">BCCDC COVID-19 vaccine information</a> .

## Anxiety about TB and COVID-19

Coping with a TB diagnosis itself can be difficult and cause a lot of worry. On top of that, the changes and uncertainty in our lives due to COVID-19 have created anxiety, stress, depression and fear among people of all ages. It is understandable to have concerns about how a COVID-19 infection could impact your health. Knowing the facts from credible sources, connecting with people you trust, and finding time to do self-care and practice wellness at home may be helpful. Visit the BC website [Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety and Depression](#) for more information and access to mental health services. For further general information about coping with stress visit the WHO's [Coping with Stress during the 2019n-CoV outbreak](#) infographic.

## Stigma associated with COVID-19

Stigma has a very powerful impact on our health and well-being. In our society, both TB and now COVID-19 are associated with social stigma which can cause significant harms such as discrimination, labelling, and stereotyping. As a result, people affected by stigma may hide their illness and avoid seeking care; may feel discouraged about engaging in healthy behaviours; may be denied access to services, including housing and healthcare; may receive verbal, emotional and physical abuse; and may feel lonely and ashamed. If you or someone close to you is experiencing stigma, reach out to a friend, community or health care provider you trust for support. If you are interested in understanding ways to help stop stigma, visit Health Canada's website on [COVID-19: Testing and reducing stigma](#) and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) website on [mental health, stigma and prejudice](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you have more questions about COVID-19 visit the [Common Questions](#) section of the BCCDC website.