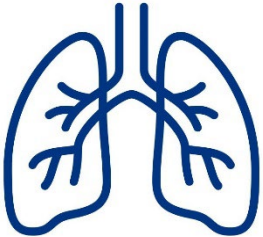


4. Respiratory Illness

Viral Respiratory Infections	
What they are	Infection caused by a virus that affects the respiratory system (e.g. nose, throat, lungs) Examples: • Flu (influenza) • COVID-19 • RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) 
Symptoms	• New or worsening cough • Shortness of breath • Sore throat • Runny nose/nasal congestion • Fever/chills 
How they spread	• From person to person (e.g. coughs, sneezes, singing, talking) • Crowded, closed spaces with poor air flow and ventilation • Touching contaminated surfaces

Learn more about Respiratory Illness:

- Poster on Respiratory Illness in poster section of Appendices
- HealthLinkBC: [Handling Respiratory Illnesses](#)
- Health Canada: [Respiratory Viruses](#)

4.1 How to Prevent Respiratory Illness

Prepare for and prevent respiratory illness on site:

- ☐ **Keep a list** of contacts in healthcare and Public Health. Use “Key Health Contacts” template in this handbook
- ☐ **Follow prevention measures.** Practice and encourage habits that reduce the risk of getting sick, such as:

Hand Hygiene

- Wash hands with soap and water when:
 - Hands look dirty
 - After using the bathroom
 - Before eating or preparing food
- Hand sanitizers can be used in other situations

Respiratory Etiquette

- Cover your coughs with your sleeve or a tissue
- Throw away used tissues into trash right away
- Wear a mask when sick

- ☐ **Keep supplies** like hand soap, hand sanitizer, and masks available in easy to access locations

- ☐ **Follow** cleaning and disinfection protocols for your site
 - Regularly clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs and washrooms

- ☐ **Follow** your site’s sick day policy when staff are experiencing symptoms of illness

- ☐ **Keep respiratory illness guidelines** and posters available for staff and clients for when a respiratory illness is detected

4.2 How to Manage Respiratory Illness

Admission to shelter:

Clients should not be denied access to shelters based on illness. The risk of a person who has an illness transferring their illness to another client can be reduced with infection control measures. In certain instances, Public Health may give a different recommendation, including the following situations:

- A Public Health order during a pandemic
- A case-by-case basis for a person being followed by Public Health who requires specific management

In these situations, other arrangements will be made for the person who is sick. However, there is currently no need to deny entry on an individual health basis, unless directed otherwise by your local Public Health office.

What to do when Respiratory Illness is increasing at your Site:

- ☐ **Identify client(s)** experiencing symptoms (e.g. new or worsening cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose/nasal congestion, fever/chills)

- ☐ **Promote physical distancing** if possible and practical for your site:
 - Separate room for sick clients
 - Distancing beds by 2 metres
 - Moving chairs further apart in common areas
 - Using physical barriers between beds, arranging adjacent beds head to toe

- ☐ **Watch for** potential spread among staff and clients

- ☐ **Wear personal protective equipment (PPE)** when interacting with symptomatic clients (e.g. mask and gloves) and follow additional PPE guidance from your Public Health team

- ☐ **Keep supplies** like masks, hand sanitizer, and hand hygiene sinks available for everyone

- ☐ **Discourage sharing** of items that touch the mouth (e.g. drinks, food, utensils, cigarettes, smoking supplies)

- ☐ **Consider enhanced cleaning** and disinfecting protocols:
 - Prioritize cleaning and disinfecting common areas where people gather and high-touch areas (e.g. elevators, common amenity spaces, doorknobs, countertops, bathroom surfaces) a minimum of **3 or more times per day**
 - Use an appropriate disinfectant for contaminated surfaces:
 - If possible, **use store bought disinfectants** with a drug identification number (DIN) on the bottle (e.g. Clorox, Lysol, Fantastik, Microban, Zep, etc.)
 - If preparing your own solution, follow instructions on the label or as follows:
Regular cleaning: 1 litre of water (4 cups) per 20 mL (4 teaspoons) bleach
For blood or body substances: 1 litre of water (4 cups) per 125ml (half cup) bleach

- ☐ **Increase air flow**, ventilation, and air filtration if possible (e.g. changing HEPA filters, increasing central air conditioning, opening windows)

- ☐ **Help get medical care** for people who are sick as needed or requested (e.g. physician connected to shelter, walk-in clinic, emergency room)

When to call Public Health for Respiratory Illness

Your local Public Health office is available to take your calls if you have any questions or concerns. Viral respiratory illness is common and seasonal. Outside of a pandemic, there is no mandated requirement to call Public Health for respiratory illness symptoms.

However, **please call when the situation at your site is not improving (after taking the measures outlined in this handbook), or when people are severely sick and have declined care or many people have been hospitalized.**