Coronavirus (COVID-19)

A Northern Health guide for your community

This document will be updated as new information becomes available.

Northern Health Communications - June 4, 2020
A message from Northern Health,

These are uncertain times and many Northerners are feeling anxious or worried. As your health authority, we wanted to let you know what we’re doing to prepare for the COVID-19 outbreak.

We also want to talk about the vital role that we all have in preventing infection and slowing the spread, so we can all stay as safe as possible.

Please share this guide with friends and family. Stay connected with Northern Health for up-to-date and reliable information for your community.

@Northern_Health

@NorthernHealth

@Northernhealthbc

www.northernhealth.ca
# Table of Contents

## Section 1: COVID-19: Key facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Coronavirus/COVID-19?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the symptoms?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How serious is it?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who’s most at risk of severe illness?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s the risk in pregnancy?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is COVID-19 spread?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I avoid getting and spreading the virus?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips for physical distancing</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical distancing now</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical distancing: Guidance on compliance/enforcement</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More information</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Section 2: BC’s Restart Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Golden rules.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance on mass gatherings</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearing a mask? Make sure you’re doing it safely.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do the phases mean?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WorksafeBC tools for returning to safe operation.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Section 3: Looking after yourself, your family, and your community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stay healthy: Help stop the spread of germs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s safe to get health care</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 tips for talking to kids about COVID-19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tips for mental wellness</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding opportunities for food programs</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s everyone’s role to fight stigma against COVID-19</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQs on donations</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translated resources</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printable cards to offer help in your neighbourhood</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to get printable posters from Northern Health</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents

## Section 4: Symptoms, testing, and isolating
- What should I do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19? ........................................ 32
- Testing capacity increased ................................................................. 33
- Who should be tested for COVID-19? .................................................. 34
- How long should I self-isolate for? ....................................................... 35
- What’s the difference between self-isolation and physical distancing? .................. 35
- Treatment for COVID-19 .............................................................. 35

## Section 5: Changes to Northern Health services
- Connections bus service ................................................................. 37
- Elective surgeries resuming ............................................................. 38
- Lab services .................................................................................. 38
- Outpatient Hepatitis C testing ......................................................... 39
- Cardiac services ........................................................................... 39
- Pay parking .................................................................................. 39

## Section 6: What’s Northern Health doing?
- Task groups ................................................................. 41
- Response strategies ................................................................. 43
- Provincial response strategies .................................................. 45
SECTION 1

COVID-19: Key facts

• What is Coronavirus/COVID-19?
• What are the symptoms?
• How serious is it?
• Who’s most at risk of severe illness?
• What’s the risk in pregnancy?
• How is COVID-19 spread?
• How can I avoid getting and spreading the virus?
• Tips for physical distancing
• Physical distancing now
• Physical distancing: Guidance on compliance/ enforcement
• More information
What is coronavirus/COVID-19?
A new coronavirus has caused an outbreak of respiratory illness known as COVID-19. Many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, but mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases.

What are the symptoms?
The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to those of other respiratory infections, including the flu. COVID-19 symptoms can include some or all of the following:

- Cough
- Fever
- Breathing difficulties
- Headache
- Generalized muscle pain
- Sore throat

Some people with the infection will have mild symptoms, or none at all, but they can still spread the virus to others – who might develop more severe symptoms.

How serious is it?
About 81% of cases are mild, and 19% are serious. “Serious” means the person has to go into hospital.

Of those 19%, 5% need intensive care and ventilator support (a machine to take over breathing for the patient while their body fights the virus).

The death rate is 1%, but this is higher in areas where the health care system is overwhelmed.

Who’s most at risk of severe illness?
People of all ages can be infected by the new coronavirus. People over 70, and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease) are more likely to be severely ill.

What’s the risk in pregnancy?
Based on the evidence we have so far, pregnant women are no more likely to get COVID-19 than the general population.

In some women, pregnancy changes how your body responds to severe viral infections. This is something midwives and obstetricians have known for many years and are used to dealing with.

Currently, there is no evidence that pregnant women who get this infection are more at risk of serious complications than any other healthy individuals, but the amount of evidence available is quite limited, so if you’re pregnant, please take extra care.

For more information, check [www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/clinical-care/pregnancy](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/clinical-care/pregnancy)
How is COVID-19 spread?
COVID-19 spreads mainly through tiny drops of saliva or discharge from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

This means it’s very important to cough or sneeze into your elbow, or into a tissue.

How can I avoid getting and spreading the virus?

1. Practice physical distancing

Practice physical distancing. Physical distancing saves lives by reducing the chance you will become infected. It also slows the spread of infection, so Northern Health has a better chance of keeping up. It’s everyone’s responsibility to practice social distancing, whether you have symptoms or not.

   a. Avoid close contact with other people. Keep at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from them.

   b. Avoid public transport – buses, taxis, ride-sharing.

   c. Work from home – speak to your employer about this.

   d. Avoid social activities such as going to cafes, pubs, restaurants, or movie theatres.

   e. Avoid going on children’s playdates, such as going to a playground or park.

   f. Don’t have visitors to your home. This includes friends and family (other than the family members you live with).

   g. Don’t go to your doctor’s office without phoning ahead.

2. Wash your hands often

   a. Wash your hands often with soap and water – for at least 20 seconds.

   b. Always wash your hands when you get home or arrive at work.

3. Use hand sanitizer

   If soap and water are unavailable, use hand sanitizer.

4. Use coughing etiquette

   a. Cough or sneeze into your elbow, or into a tissue.

   b. Put used tissues in the garbage immediately, and then wash your hands.

5. Avoid touching your face

   Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, or mouth.

h. If you have questions, call your family doctor or nurse practitioner. You can also call the NH COVID-19 Online Clinic at 1-844-645-7811.
How can I avoid getting and spreading COVID-19?

1. Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and hot water, or use hand sanitizer.
2. Use a tissue for coughs and sneezes.
3. If you don’t have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
5. Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.
6. Even if you have no symptoms, work at home if possible and avoid social venues.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19? What should I do if I feel sick?

- Fever and tiredness
- Breathing difficulties
- Cough

If you have a new continuous cough or high temperature you should stay at home for 10 days.

Practice physical distancing (stay 2 meters away from other people) and stay home if possible.

Call the Northern Health COVID-19 online clinic at 1-844-645-7811. Don’t go to your doctor or health care facility.

If your symptoms get worse, seek medical advice.
Tips for physical distancing

We’re asking you to avoid physical contact with people outside your home, including those you love and enjoy spending time with.

We know this will be difficult, especially for people who are already isolated. Some tips:

• Use technology to connect remotely.
• Setting elderly family members up with technology to allow for video calls, such as Zoom or Facetime, can be a big help.
• Ask your elderly or vulnerable family members, neighbours, and friends if you can drop groceries off (on their front porch) for them.
• Neighbourhood Facebook or WhatsApp groups can help people connect and look after each other.
• Check out the cards at the end of this booklet. If you like, leave some on the front steps of houses along your street to offer help to those who are staying at home.

How long will we need to be physically distant?
We all need to follow the recommendations of our public health officer, health authorities, and government. Right now, it’s everyone’s responsibility to slow the spread.

We don’t know the timeline yet, but you can count on Northern Health to keep you informed.
Physical Distancing NOW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVOID</th>
<th>USE CAUTION</th>
<th>SAFE TO DO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Group gatherings</td>
<td>• Visits to supermarkets</td>
<td>• Going for a walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visits to bars/restaurants</td>
<td>• Visits to the pharmacy</td>
<td>• Jogging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sleepovers</td>
<td>• Visits to your doctor</td>
<td>• Working in the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Playdates</td>
<td>• Travelling</td>
<td>• Home improvement projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visiting the elderly with children</td>
<td>• Checking on friends and family</td>
<td>• Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Crowded retail stores</td>
<td>• Public transport</td>
<td>• Going for a drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gyms</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Video calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having visitors to your home</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Phone calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having non-essential workers in your home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Symptom-free doesn’t mean infection-free!
Physical distancing: Guidance on compliance / enforcement

As of March 31, BCCDC tipsheet provides information for compliance and enforcement officers on implementing public health orders for physical distancing. It also includes a useful template message that enforcement officers can use to respond to complainants.

Compliance and enforcement officers include:

• community safety personnel
• bylaw enforcement officers
• provincial compliance enforcement officers
• etc.

If you have any questions or concerns, call the COVID-19 Online Clinic and Information Line for Northern BC residents at **1-844-645-7811**.

As well, the **BC COVID-19 Support app** is now available on the Apple App Store and Google Play (for Android). You can self-assess for COVID-19, and the app will also send you the latest updates, trusted resources, and alerts.

Also, BC has a self-assessment website – [bc.thrive.health](http://bc.thrive.health) – to help people decide whether they need assessment or testing for COVID-19.

**Trusted websites:**

- [www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19)
- [www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/common-questions](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/common-questions)
- [www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses](http://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses)
SECTION 2

BC’s Restart Plan

- Golden Rules
- Guidance on mass gatherings
- Wearing a mask? Make sure you’re doing it safely
- What do the phases mean?
- WorksafeBC offers tools for returning to safe operation
BC’s Restart Plan: Golden Rules

The Province of BC recently announced BC’s Restart Plan, an outline for a gradual return to a new normal. Following the rules below is key to keeping everyone safe.

Golden rules for everybody

Practice physical distancing
Clean your hands
Stay at home if you feel ill - no exceptions
Increase cleaning at home and work
Stay informed
Cover your cough
Minimize non-essential travel
Make spaces safer
Guidance on mass gatherings

**Guidance from the Province of BC**: At this time, all event organizers are ordered to limit all public gatherings larger than 50 people. This includes indoor and outdoor sporting events, conferences, meetings, concerts, theatres, religious gatherings or other similar events.

A new order from May 22, 2020 replaces the March 16, 2020 order and includes an amendment of no more than 50 vehicles for outdoor drive-in events. See the latest [Order of the Provincial Health Officer on Mass gatherings](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/provincial-health-officer/orders-statements).

The timing for a safe restart for activities requiring large gatherings is still to be determined as part of Phase four of [BC’s Restart Plan](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/restart-bc). Opening will be conditional on at least one of the following: wide vaccination, “community immunity” or broad successful treatments.
Wearing a mask? Make sure you’re doing it safely.

Golden rules for wearing masks

- If healthy, distancing is always better
- Always wash your hands
- If sick, stay home - no exceptions
- Try not to touch your face
- Reserve medical masks for health care workers
- Treat everyone with respect - some people wear masks out of courtesy
- Your mask should fit snugly, covering your nose and mouth
What do the phases mean?

As the BC government and residents work together to implement BC’s Restart Plan, a phased approach will help ensure a safe return of services.

Each phase will see more services resuming operations under enhanced protocols.

Phase 2: Started May 20, 2020

- Restoration of health services
  - Re-scheduling elective surgery
- Medically related services:
  - Dentistry, physiotherapy, registered massage therapy, and chiropractors
  - Physical therapy, speech therapy, and similar services
- Retail sector
- Hair salons, barbers, and other personal service establishments
- In-person counselling
- Restaurants, cafes, and pubs (with sufficient distancing measures)
- Museums, art galleries, and libraries
- Office-based worksites
- Recreation and sports
- Parks, beaches, and outdoor spaces
- Child care

WorkSafeBC has created a resource for services returning to safe operations during Phase 2.
Phase 3: June 2020 to September 2020, if transmission rates remain low or in decline

- Hotels and resorts (June 2020)
- Parks – broader reopening, including some overnight camping (June 2020)
- Film industry – beginning with domestic productions (June/July 2020)
- Select entertainment – movies and symphony, but not large concerts (July 2020)
- Post-secondary education – with mix of online and in-class (September 2020)
- K-12 education – with only a partial return this school year (September 2020)

Date to be determined, and conditional on one or more of wide vaccination, “community” immunity, or broad successful treatment.

- Activities requiring large gatherings, such as:
  - Conventions
  - Live audience professional sports
  - Concerts
  - International tourism

For more information, see the Government of BC’s restart plan

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**WorkSafeBC offers tools for returning to safe operation**

WorkSafeBC has been given the responsibility of developing the framework around BC’s Restart Plan.

Every employer must ensure the health and safety of their workers, including developing a plan on how to assess the risk of COVID-19 exposure in the workplace and implement measures to keep their workers safe.

A new WorkSafe BC page gives employers information and resources to help minimize the risks of exposure to the coronavirus at their workplaces: COVID-19 and returning to safe operation.

In consultation with industry and labour stakeholders in each sector, WorkSafeBC has developed various general and industry-specific materials, as well as general resources for all workplaces. These include a COVID-19 safety plan template, workplace posters, information on cleaning and hygiene practices, and guidance on the selection and use of masks.

For more information, see Returning to safe operation: FAQs.
SECTION 3

Looking after yourself, your family, and your community

- Stay healthy: Help stop the spread of germs
- 7 tips for talking to kids about COVID-19
- Tips for mental wellness
- It’s everyone’s role to fight stigma against COVID-19
- Donations
- Translated resources
- Printable cards to offer help in your neighbourhood
- How to get printable posters from Northern Health
Stay Healthy!

Help stop the spread of germs. Protect yourself and others.

- Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Make sure to dry your hands.
- Avoid touching your face. Viruses can live on your hands for up to 5 minutes and on hard surfaces for up 2 days.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow. Remember to wash and dry your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- If you use a tissue, dispose of it as soon as possible, then wash your hands.

Northern Health COVID-19 Online Clinic & Information Line: 1-844-645-7811
BC Govt. COVID-19 Helpline: 1-888-COVID19 or 1-888-268-4319
It’s safe to get health care

Clinics are still open: Don’t hesitate to call your doctor or nurse practitioner

Remember, your doctor or nurse practitioner is still here for you! If you have a health care concern, don’t hesitate to call.

Please call ahead (don’t drop in), because they may not be seeing patients in person – many offices are doing appointments over the phone or online instead.

Please note that emergency departments are still open as well.

If you have symptoms of a cold, the flu, or COVID-19, call the NH COVID-19 Online Clinic and Info Line at 1-844-645-7811.

It’s safe for your child to get health care

Health care for your child is safe. Offices, clinics and hospitals have the correct supplies and procedures in place to keep everyone safe during your visit. Your family can still get essential medical care.

Very few children and youth have become seriously ill from COVID-19. It is safest for your child to get the medical care they need, such as routine immunizations. The risks of not seeking medical care can be much higher than the risks of your child getting sick from COVID-19.

If you’re not sure whether your child needs medical care, use the red, amber and green direction in the resource linked below to help you decide. If your child has symptoms of COVID-19, call ahead to the hospital or clinic, if you can, to tell them you’re coming.

For more information, see the full message from Child Health BC
7 TIPS FOR TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT COVID-19

1. Don’t be afraid to talk about it.
   Convey the facts and set an emotionally reassuring tone.

2. Be age-appropriate.
   Older kids can generally handle more detail than younger kids. Focus on answering their questions. Do your best to answer honestly and clearly. It’s okay if you can’t answer everything.

3. Follow their lead.
   Encourage them to ask questions and share their perspective. Invite them to tell you anything they may have heard about COVID-19, and to express how they feel.
Check yourself.
Feeling anxious? Take some time to calm down before trying to have a conversation or answer questions.

Focus on actions you can take.
Emphasize safety precautions everyone can take to help keep themselves and others healthy: good hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette, physical distancing, and staying home if you aren’t feeling well.

Stick to routine.
Structured days with regular mealtimes and bedtimes are key to keeping kids happy and healthy, especially during challenging times.

Keep talking.
Let them know the lines of communication are going to be open, and that as you learn more, you’ll share the information with them.

Northern Health COVID-19 Online Clinic: 1-844-645-7811
BC Govt. COVID-19 Helpline: 1-888-COVID19 or 1-888-268-4319
www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/coronavirus-information-covid-19

Credit: Child Mind Institute
TIPS FOR Mental Wellness

- Take breaks from social media
- Help others if you can
- Ensure you are getting regular and good quality nutrition, sleep, and exercise
- Connect with friends & family in a way that keeps you and others safe: like phone and video calls

Mental health resources:
We know that this is an uncertain time and can trigger significant stress. The following resources can provide tips for managing COVID-19 stress, anxiety, and depression.

Managing COVID-19 Stress, Anxiety, & Depression
[www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/managing-covid-stress](www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/managing-your-health/mental-health-substance-use/managing-covid-stress)

COVID-19 and Anxiety
[www.hereohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/covid-19-and-anxiety](www.hereohelp.bc.ca/infosheet/covid-19-and-anxiety)

New resource on child and youth mental health and substance use
A new NH resource helps youth and families get help with mental health and substance use challenges: [Child & Youth Mental Health and Substance Use Resources for Families](https://www.northernhealth.ca/health-and-wellness/mental-health-and-substance-use/resources-for-families).

Please be aware that there is help available during these difficult times; don’t hesitate to reach out for yourself or on behalf of a loved one.
TIPS FOR Mental Wellness

If you need help:

Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre
Provides confidential, non-judgmental, free emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including thoughts of suicide.

Call 604-872-3311 (Greater Vancouver)
Toll-free 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
www.crisiscentre.bc.ca

The KUU-US Crisis Response Service
Provides 24/7 culturally-aware crisis support to Indigenous Peoples in B.C.

Call 1-800-588-8717
www.kuu-uscrisisline.ca

Funding opportunities for food programs

Ensuring access to food for all is an important part of the COVID-19 response. This document offers potential granting opportunities for community-based food programs – see Food Program Funding Opportunities.

If you know of, or represent, a community-based organization that supports food access, some of these grants may be helpful. Each grant has specific eligibility guidelines, so be sure to read the information in detail.
It’s everyone’s role to fight stigma against COVID-19

Now more than ever, it’s important to be kind to one another. Some groups of people may be experiencing stigma because of COVID-19, including people diagnosed with COVID-19 and health care workers. Stigma is a negative stereotype or negative association about people with an illness.

It hurts everyone by creating fear or anger towards other people, and negatively affecting the mental health of stigmatized groups and the communities they live in.

How do we stop stigma? Know the facts, share only accurate information with others, and most of all, be kind.

We all have a role to play. Stop stigma, and please be kind.
Northern Health is extremely grateful for the many offers we’ve received from individuals and organizations who want to donate protective equipment, financial support, and time to our health care workers and hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q: Can I donate items to Northern Health?

Yes. If you wish to donate any items, please email the details to ppe.donation@northernhealth.ca so we can better manage these requests and determine if the item(s) can be used in a healthcare setting.

Please note donated items must be unused and unopened, and unfortunately we are not accepting homemade items at this time. Please do not drop off items at any NH facilities without permission.

Q: Can I make a financial donation?

Yes. Financial donations can still be made to your local health care foundation or auxiliary. Information about your local foundation or auxiliary can be found here: www.northernhealth.ca/about-us/get-involved/hospital-foundations-auxiliaries#hospital-foundations-and-societies
Translated Resources

COVID-19 resources are available in many different languages in addition to English and French.

UBC Department of Emergency Medicine
digem.med.ubc.ca/covid-19-multilingual-resources

• Chinese Resources: digem.med.ubc.ca/covid-19-multilingual-resources/chinese-covid-19-resources-2/

• South Asian Resources: digem.med.ubc.ca/covid-19-multilingual-resources/south-asian-covid-19-resources-2-2/

• Farsi Resources: digem.med.ubc.ca/covid-19-multilingual-resources/covid-19-farsi-resources/

• Korean Resources: digem.med.ubc.ca/covid-19-multilingual-resources/korean-covid-19-resources/

• Italian Resources: digem.med.ubc.ca/covid-19-multilingual-resources/italian-covid-19-resources/

Fraser Health
Information and downloadable material to help answer questions about COVID-19: www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/coronavirus/coronavirus---resources#.XouMpZDws2x

• Farsi

• Hindi

• Korean

• Punjabi

• Simplified Chinese

Indigenous Language Resources

Government of Canada public service announcements about COVID-19 are available in various Indigenous languages: www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1583781906998/1583781926813#chp1
Hello! If you’re self-isolating, I can help.

My name is: ........................................................................................................................................

I live locally at: ........................................................................................................................................

My phone number is: ........................................................................................................................................

If you’re self-isolating due to COVID-19, I can help with:

☐ Picking up shopping  ☐ Posting mail

☐ A friendly phone call  ☐ Urgent Supplies

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2 metres distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on doorstep.
How to get printable posters from Northern Health

To order posters to put up in your community, visit the Northern Health website: www.northernhealth.ca/health-topics/coronavirusinformation-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-resources

Stay Healthy! Help stop the spread of germs.

Physical Distancing and COVID-19

7 Tips for Talking to Kids about COVID-19
SECTION 4

Symptoms, testing, and isolating

- What should I do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19?
- Testing capacity increased
- Who should be tested for COVID-19?
- How long should I self-isolate for?
- What’s the difference between self-isolation and physical distancing?
- Treatment for COVID-19
What should I do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19?

1. **Self-isolate.** This means you need to stay at home if you have any of the following:
   
   a. **A fever.** If you don’t have a thermometer, you might feel hot to touch on your chest or back.
   
   b. **A new, continuous, dry cough.** This means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
   
   c. **Difficulty breathing**
   
   d. **A sore throat**

2. **People who live with you also need to self-isolate** (see guidelines in the section on the next page called “How long should I self-isolate for?”).

3. Call the Northern Health COVID-19 online clinic and information line at **1-844-645-7811.** It’s run by nurses, doctors, and nurse practitioners – they will help you decide if you need to be tested.

4. Don’t go to see your family doctor or nurse practitioner, pharmacist, or emergency department. Instead of going in person, call your family doctor or nurse practitioner.
As of April 8, 2020, BC now has the capacity to test more broadly for COVID-19. Anyone who has symptoms of the flu, a cold, or COVID-19 can now ask their doctor or nurse practitioner for a referral to be tested. Any physician or nurse practitioner can now order a COVID-19 test, based on their clinical judgment.

To get a referral for testing, people can also call the NH COVID-19 Online Clinic & Information Line at 1-844-645-7811.

Important notes:

- If you don’t have a referral (from your doctor / your nurse practitioner / the NH Online Clinic), please DO NOT come to collection centres (testing centres). To keep our staff at the centres safe, we need to know you’re coming.

- Not everyone needs a test. People who don’t have symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19

For detailed information on testing, see the next page.
Who should be tested for COVID-19?

Any physician can now order a COVID-19 test, based on their clinical judgment. This is because BC’s laboratory testing capacity has increased.

Important: If you don’t have a referral (from your doctor / your nurse practitioner / the NH Online Clinic), please DO NOT come to collection centres (testing centres). To keep our staff at the centres safe, we need to know you’re coming.

People without symptoms should not be tested for COVID-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anyone in these two columns SHOULD be tested:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The following groups should be tested if they develop <strong>new respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms, however mild.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This includes fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, nasal congestion, loss of sense of smell, sore throat, painful swallowing, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, loss of appetite, chills, vomiting, or diarrhea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Residents and staff of long-term care facilities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Patients requiring admission to hospital or likely to be admitted,</strong> including pregnant individuals in their 3rd trimester, patients on hemodialysis, or cancer patients receiving radiation or chemotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Patients who are part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak,</strong> as determined by the Medical Health Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The following groups should be tested if they develop a <strong>fever (over 38 degrees Celsius)</strong> AND <strong>new onset of (or worsening of chronic) cough or shortness of breath</strong>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Health care workers,</strong> including community pharmacists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Residents of remote, isolated or Indigenous communities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>People living and working in group settings,</strong> such as work camps, correctional facilities, shelters, group homes, assisted living, or seniors’ residences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>People who are homeless or have unstable housing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Essential service providers,</strong> including first responders (e.g., paramedics, police officers, firefighters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Returning travelers</strong> identified at a point of entry to Canada</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Consider testing those from this category who have mild symptoms
How long should I self-isolate for?

1. **If you have symptoms of COVID-19**, you need to stay home for **10 days**.

2. **If you’re returning from travel**, you need to self-isolate for **14 days** (even if you don’t have symptoms).

3. **If you live with someone** who has symptoms, you need to stay home for **10 days** from the day the first person in the home started having symptoms.
   
   a. **If you also develop symptoms**, you need to stay home for **10 days** from the day your symptoms began.

4. After 10 days, if your temperature is normal and you feel better, you can return to your routine activities. You might still have a dry cough, but that’s OK. Your cough might last for a few weeks, but if you just have a cough (and no other symptoms), it’s OK to stop self-isolating after 10 days.

If you have symptoms and you live with someone who is 70 or older, has a long-term health condition, is pregnant, or has a weakened immune system, try to find somewhere else for them (or yourself) to stay for 10 days.

If you have to stay home together, try to keep away from each other as much as possible.

**Treatment for COVID-19**

There is currently no treatment for COVID-19. Antibiotics don’t work against viruses, only against bacteria.

- COVID-19 is caused by a virus, so taking antibiotics won’t stop you from getting it.
- As well, taking antibiotics won’t help you get better if you have COVID-19.
- However, if you’re hospitalized for COVID-19, you might be given antibiotics because bacterial co-infection is possible.

If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19, you need to stay home (along with all other members of your household) for 10 days after your symptoms begin.
SECTION 5

Changes to Northern Health services

- Connections bus service
- Lab services
- Outpatient Hepatitis C testing
- Cardiac services
- Pay parking
Connections bus service gradually returning to former rules on who can travel

Passengers who can use the bus now:

- People traveling for non-urgent medical procedures, such as appointments with chiropractors or massage therapists. You will have to show proof of your appointment.

- People who have been discharged from hospital or another facility by health authority hospital staff. (Appointment verification not required.)

- Medically necessary companions

- Northern Health staff & physicians (including health care students), who are travelling for work

We will not be accepting:

- Passengers travelling without a medical appointment, including seniors (60+).

Northern Health Connections will continue to run with limited seating and enhanced safety measures until further notice. Some changes we have implemented will be permanent, including:

- All travel must now be booked 48 hours in advance.

- We will not be accepting any walk-on passengers: no exceptions.

- Anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms will not be allowed to travel.

- To ensure physical distancing, a maximum of 12 passengers will be allowed on a coach, and a maximum of five passengers will be allowed on a minibus.

Northern Health Connections will release further information in the future, as eligibility further expands.

Reserve your seat by visiting nhconnections.ca or calling 1-888-647-4997.
Elective surgeries resuming: New changes help keep patients safe

Northern Health is resuming elective surgeries that were postponed due to COVID-19. We are committed to helping keep patients, medical staff and support staff safe, and minimizing the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Where possible, we will do pre-surgical screenings by phone. This means patients won’t have to come to the hospital in person before their surgeries.

We have begun contacting patients to book procedures and/or to confirm if they are willing and able to move forward with surgery. We recognize that some people may still prefer to postpone their surgeries.

Patients who need urgent surgery, emergency surgery, or cancer-related surgery will continue to be prioritized.

To reduce the risk of COVID-19 for patients, staff and medical staff, Northern Health will be doing the following:

• Assessing patients by phone before surgery
• Using consistent screening tools and risk assessment guidelines
• Assessing patients 24-72 hours before surgery and on arrival on the day of surgery
• Scheduling surgeries with extra time for additional cleaning and infection control.

Patients will be rescheduled based on priority determined by their surgeons.

To provide surgeries as quickly as possible, Northern Health will be back to full surgical capacity as soon as we can and, where possible, will expand surgical capacity over the coming months.

This depends on several factors, such as an adequate supply of personal protective equipment, full commitment of all partners, and monitoring of any possible fall/winter resurgence of COVID-19.

Laboratory and Diagnostic Imaging

Northern Health sites are in the process of developing site safety plans in order to restart services. These plans are an Order of the Provincial Health Officer and required for WorkSafe BC in order to restart. At this time, we don’t have specific timelines, and it may vary by community. Please stay tuned for more info or check our website for updated info as it becomes available, here: https://www.northernhealth.ca/services/hospital-services/lab-services/lab-locations
British Columbia’s health authorities have been directed to move all hospitals within the province to Outbreak Response Phase 2. This mandates shifting all hospitals towards prioritizing only urgent and emergent cardiac procedures, diagnostic testing and clinic outpatient visits.

All non-urgent scheduled cardiac procedures, diagnostic testing or appointments will be postponed. Further, Northern Health cardiac program has developed an operational plan to serve as guiding policy for Cardiac Services across the Northern Health region, in alignment with recent Canadian Cardiovascular Society recommendations and the outbreak response phase.

**Temporary suspension of pay parking at Northern Health sites**

In an effort to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, Northern Health is temporarily suspending pay parking for the public, staff, and medical staff, effective April 1 through April 30, 2020.

Northern Health’s only public pay-parking site in the region is at the University Hospital of Northern BC (UHNBC) in Prince George. Northern Health is working with IMPark, the parking services provider at UHNBC, to implement this change to public and staff parking immediately.

Pay parking machines require people to touch screens and buttons that may have been touched by someone previously. Discontinuing the use of pay parking machines reduces the risk of potential spread of infection and also supports physical distancing measures that have been mandated by the Provincial Health Officer.

**Temporary suspension of outpatient Hepatitis C testing**

The BCCDC performs all Northern Health’s Hepatitis C testing; however, they are also currently performing high volumes of COVID-19 testing.

To free up testing capacity for COVID-19 tests, non-urgent outpatient Hepatitis C serology, viral load and genotype testing will be suspended immediately, with reassessment on April 17/2020.

Testing will continue to be performed for hospitalized and emergent patients and for organ donation.

**Cardiac services**

British Columbia’s health authorities have been directed to move all hospitals within the province to Outbreak Response Phase 2. This mandates shifting all hospitals towards prioritizing only urgent and emergent cardiac procedures, diagnostic testing and clinic outpatient visits.

All non-urgent scheduled cardiac procedures, diagnostic testing or appointments will be postponed. Further, Northern Health cardiac program has developed an operational plan to serve as guiding policy for Cardiac Services across the Northern Health region, in alignment with recent Canadian Cardiovascular Society recommendations and the outbreak response phase.
SECTION 6

What’s Northern Health doing? Response strategies

- Task groups
- Response strategies
- Provincial response strategies
All NH sites are involved in the ongoing planning and preparation for COVID-19. NH has an emergency operations centre (EOC) in place to oversee the response to COVID-19. It includes the following 11 task groups:

1. **Phase Scenario and Response**
   - Inventories of capacity, equipment, reducing non-urgent procedures, and services to increase capacity.

2. **Acute Management & Ambulatory Care**
   - Inventories of capacity, equipment, reducing non-urgent procedures, and services to increase capacity.

3. **Long-Term Care Response & Capacity**
   - Capacity inventories, and protecting residents with visitor access restrictions, and screening.

4. **Population and Public Health**
   - Ensuring provincial guidelines, policy and procedures for screening, testing, contact tracing and isolation are understood, communicated, and followed, as they evolve, working with industry work camps to ensure prevention and management of COVID-19 is understood.

5. **Staffing & Workplace Health & Safety**
   - Reviewing essential service plans and staff deployment plans; ensuring staff have clear PPE use information, and access to psychological health and safety resources.
Logistics and Supply
Tracking and managing supply use; strategies for mitigating supply shortages.

Communications
Working with Ministry of Health to develop and share clear and frequently-updated information to NH clinicians, front-line health care workers and staff, stakeholders and communities.

Business Continuity
Ensuring critical business areas such as staffing, payroll and information systems are not interrupted.

Emergency Departments & Patient Transfer
Ensuring EDs are prepared and patient transfer protocols are clear; scenario-based exercises.

Primary and Community Care / Urgent & Primary Care Centres
Establishing virtual options for screening, assessment and referral for testing.

Infection Prevention & Control & Environmental Cleaning
In NH facilities.
The Province of BC has a 4-phased outbreak response. Here’s how Northern Health has implemented it so far:

- Created acute care capacity and acute care utilization teams
- Established 1-800 line and virtual clinic
- Created more capacity in surgical, ambulatory care, medical imaging and lab
- Closed adult care centres and postponed respite care (care plans being updated)
- Shifted visitor policy
- Completed policy on working remotely
- Completed inventory of non-clinical staff who could be redeployed
- Reviewed pharmacy process, protocols, and business continuity
- Developed algorithms for emergency departments
- Established patient transport office 24/7, and associated protocols
- Updated protocols for kidney, cancer and cardiac care
- Developed protocols for contact tracing, case management, and self-monitoring
- Completed initial round of public materials and messaging, including daily staff digests, daily physician updates, weekly leadership memos, and weekly stakeholder updates
- Updated environmental cleaning
- Reassessed protocols for personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Held tabletop exercises for emergency department presentations and inpatient admissions
- Inventoried capacity for acute care and long-term care

Phases 1 and 2: Complete
Phases 3 and 4: Currently under way

- Shifting to essential community services
- Creating public health response teams
- Reviewing ground transport
- Working with the Provincial Lab Agency to add testing lab equipment to the North
- Bolstering patient transport capacity
- Stabilizing supply chain for personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Modeling to inform ventilator distributions
- Forming local emergency operations committees
- Finalizing critical care plan for implementation – intubation, ventilation, negative pressure rooms, locations
- Creating inpatient areas to cohort those with respiratory symptoms
- Establishing separate emergency room triage areas for those with respiratory symptoms
- Establishing critical care clinical consultation and support team with clear process for accessing service
- Finalizing COVID-19 ethics framework and consultation service
The Province of BC has put in place a multi-level response structure, headed by the Premier and Health Minister. Below this are committees and coordination centres focused on providing information and coordinating the response for Public Health and health system operations, planning, logistics and finance.

1. **Cabinet Sub-Committee**
   Chaired by **Premier John Horgan** and **Minister of Health Adrian Dix**.

2. **Deputy Minister Committee**
   Chaired by the Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health and Deputy Minister, Emergency Management BC.

3. **Communication and Information Centre**
   to serve the general public.

4. **Health Emergency Coordination Centre (HECC)**
   Incident Commander for the Ministry of Health coordination centre is **Peter Pokorny, Associate Deputy Minister**. The HECC includes the following streams of work:
   - Public Health Operations
   - Planning
   - Logistics
   - Finance
   - Health System Operations (includes a Health Authority Chief Operating Officers group)