

Tips for protecting yourself and your loved ones from COVID-19

In BC, non-medical information about COVID-19 is available 7:30 am - 8:00 pm, 7 days a week at 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319).

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is an illness caused by a coronavirus. Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold.

Spread

Coronaviruses are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- ✓ respiratory droplets through a cough or sneeze
- ✓ close, personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- ✓ touching something with the virus on it, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth before washing your hands.

These viruses are not known to spread through ventilation systems or water.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of COVID-19 may be mild or more serious and may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus. Symptoms may include:

- ✓ fever
- ✓ cough
- ✓ difficulty breathing.

If you have symptoms

If you have symptoms of COVID-19 – fever, cough, or difficulty breathing:

- ✓ stay home to avoid spreading it to others
- ✓ if you live with others, stay in a separate room or keep a two-metre/six-foot distance
- ✓ call ahead before you visit a health care professional or call your local public health authority
- ✓ tell them your symptoms and follow their instructions. They will provide advice on what you should do
- ✓ if you need immediate medical attention, call 911 and tell them your symptoms.

Prevention

The best way to prevent the spread of infections is to:

- ✓ wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or if using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, rub until dry
- ✓ avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands
- ✓ avoid close contact with people who are sick
- ✓ when coughing or sneezing
- ✓ cover your mouth and nose with your arm or tissues to reduce the spread of germs
- ✓ avoid close contact with people who are sick.



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Prevention continued

- ✓ when coughing or sneezing:
 - cover your mouth and nose with your arm or tissues to reduce the spread of germs
 - immediately dispose of any tissues you have used into the garbage as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards
- ✓ clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, such as toys, electronic devices and doorknobs
- ✓ stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.

Other tips include:

- ✓ carry a hand sanitizer with you to make frequent cleaning of hands easy
- ✓ always wash your hands before you eat
- ✓ be especially careful in busy airports and other public transport systems about touching things and then touching your face
- ✓ do not share snacks from packets or bowls that others are dipping their fingers into
- ✓ regularly clean, not just your hands, but commonly used surfaces and devices you touch or handle.

How to protect your family, especially children

You can significantly lower the risk that children pose of spreading or catching viruses by:

- ✓ explain to them how germs spread and the importance of good hand and face hygiene
- ✓ keep household surfaces clean, especially kitchens, bathrooms and door handles
- ✓ use clean cloths to wipe surfaces, so you don't transfer germs from one surface to another
- ✓ give everyone their own towel and making sure they know not to share toothbrushes etc.
- ✓ keep your home dry and airy.

What to do if you are stressed because of the news

If you're feeling nervous about the COVID-19, you're not alone. Being concerned and empathetic about this outbreak is normal. However, you may experience feelings of discomfort, impacting concentration, productivity and even disrupting sleep patterns.

What you can do to feel better

- ✓ Stick to the facts as communicated by public-health agencies or medical professionals. Sites that include accurate information include the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#), the [BC Public Health Services Authority](#), the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and the [World Health Organization](#)
- ✓ Try and keep it in perspective. Social media can amplify misinformation. Keep in mind that there's a concerted global effort to try and contain this virus, and health authorities are keeping current with answers to common questions
- ✓ And, of course, stay healthy. Keeping your distance (at least two metres or six feet) and washing your hands often and properly is the single most effective way to stop the spread of disease.

Where can I find out more information?

You can find reliable information by visiting the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#), the [BC Public Health Services Authority](#), the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) and the [World Health Organization](#).



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