



Office of the
Provincial Health Officer



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

COVID-19: Recommendations to Post-Secondary Students, Faculty and Staff Regarding Novel Coronavirus

Provincial Coronavirus Response

UPDATED: March 5, 2020

To Post-Secondary Students, Faculty, and Staff:

We are writing to provide information on the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), a new virus causing respiratory illness.

There have been a small number of cases of COVID-19 in B.C. which are being very closely managed. Updated information regarding these cases can be found at bccdc.ca. All B.C. cases have a recent history of travel to affected areas or close contact with a traveller. There has been no sustained community transmission, and the risk to British Columbians at this point remains low.

As the areas affected by the outbreak changes and we learn more about the virus, we will provide updated public health recommendations. We are now aware that this virus can cause a range of mild to severe symptoms, and it is possible that people will not recognize symptoms that are mild. Given this new information, there are steps that people at risk of COVID-19 can take to reduce the chance of spread to others.

Advice for students, faculty, or staff on self-isolation

We now recommend that:

- Students, faculty, or staff returning from **Iran or Hubei Province, China** stay home or self-isolate in their dorm/room alone for 14 days after they left. They should monitor themselves daily for symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches, difficulty breathing).
- Students, faculty, or staff who have been in **close contact** with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 by laboratory testing should stay home or self-isolate in their dorm/room alone for 14 days after their last encounter. Individuals should monitor themselves daily for symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches, difficulty breathing).

- Students, faculty, or staff who have been in other areas affected by COVID-19 (see: Information for Travellers [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))) should monitor themselves daily for symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches, difficulty breathing) for 14 days after they left. They do not need to self-isolate.

Those who develop symptoms during the 14-day monitoring period should immediately self-isolate (stay in a room that is not shared with anyone else) and call their health-care provider or the provincial health line 8-1-1 to discuss any need for testing and follow up.

More information on self-isolation is available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/2019-novel-coronavirus-information-sheet-travelled-hubei-province-china.html>.

While these recommendations are important, they are voluntary. You do not need to report people who are not self-isolating. If you have concerns, you can discuss them with your institution's administration.

There are measures that all students, faculty, and staff can take to help reduce the risk of respiratory illnesses such as coronavirus, colds, and influenza:

- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds using soap and water.
- If a sink is not available, 60-90% alcohol-based hand rubs (hand sanitizer) can be used to clean hands if they are not visibly soiled. If they are visibly soiled, you can use an alcohol-based disposable hand wipe to remove the dirt and then use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Do not touch your face/eyes/mouth with unwashed hands.
- When you sneeze or cough, cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow, and then wash your hands.
- Stay home when you are ill.

The following advice is for people who are self-isolating. Students, faculty, or staff who are recommended to self-isolate under the guidance above should call 8-1-1 for additional advice. While self-isolating:

- Stay in a well-ventilated room, including an open window, if possible. Do not have other people come in the room.
- Do not attend classes. Limit going in shared spaces. Try to keep a two-meter distance between yourself and others whenever possible.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene as described above.
- If possible, have supplies dropped off outside your door to help avoid direct contact, and limit the number of people helping to take care of you.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Regular household cleaning products are effective against most viruses, and you can also use 1 part bleach to 9 parts water as an effective disinfectant.

- Use dedicated linen and utensils, which can be washed with soap and water and re-used, and do not need to be disposed of.
- Dispose of any tissues, wipes, masks, or gloves in a waste container lined with a plastic bag before disposing with other household waste.
- Wash your clothes in hot water (between 60-90 °C), and then thoroughly dry them.

If you are sick and depend on post-secondary housing, food, laundry, hygiene, or other critical services, please let your institution know that you are self-isolating so that they can help support you, including in your current studies.

Staying in isolation can be difficult and lonely. If you are isolated, keep contact with friends and family through phone or computer.

The Provincial Health Officer asks you not to make assumptions about the risk of students, faculty or staff based on their ethnicity or travel history.

Advice on School Events, Outings and Trips

It is not necessary to cancel school events, outings or field trips to public locations in B.C. and Canada and to most places in the world. However, please check the latest travel notices and advisories on the Government of Canada's website (<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>). Recommendations change as new information becomes available.

Additional COVID-19 travel advice is also available on Health Canada's website (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html>).

