



**COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**OFFICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

# General Procedures During COVID-19:

## Columbia's Return to Work Plan

Columbia recognizes the importance of worker safety as businesses look to resume operations following COVID-19 related work stoppages or interruptions. The following COVID-19 Safety Plan outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures we have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. We ask that everyone follow these guidelines to ensure the safety of our workplace.

### Understanding the risk

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Individuals over 65 years of age or have compromised immune systems are particularly at risk. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

### Protocols

Note that different protocols offer different protection. Wherever possible, we have implemented the protocols that offer the highest level of protection and will add more protocols as required.

- Wherever possible, employees must maintain a safe physical distance (2 meters) from one another.
- Appropriate [hygiene practices](#) include the requirement to wash or sanitize hands after coming into contact with public items.
- Additional cleaning protocols including more hand sanitizer locations, increased touchpoint cleaning and more widespread use of disinfectants have been implemented.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or sleeve.
- Stay home if you are unwell.

### Self-Screening:

- Employees are expected to monitor their own health and refrain from coming to work if they experience COVID-19 symptoms. Please see link below:
  - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>
- The Public Health Agency of Canada indicates, when returning from any travel outside Canada, the individual must self-isolate for 14 days and when returning from travel within Canada, symptoms, such as a cough, fever or difficulty breathing, should be monitored for 14 days.
- The immediate supervisor must be notified immediately if symptoms are being experienced and workdays will be missed.
- It is the employee's responsibility to be aware of sick day procedures and ensure these are being followed. (See AM.218 Leave – Time Off Policy)

### Entering Building:

- Use the door accessibility button to open front door (with your knee or side, not hands).
- Doors at the top and bottom of the stairs to remain open when permitted by fire code.

#### Walking in Corridor:

- Keep corridors free as much as possible.
- No standing in doorways or hallways for any length of time.
- Follow all signage posted regarding hygiene, attendance and traffic flow.

#### Supplies in Public Areas:

- Disinfectant wipes or disinfectant spray as needed.
- Hand Sanitizer as needed.

#### Office Spaces:

- When possible, keep office doors open at all times.
- No more than three people in an office at any given time.
- When alternative form of opening door is available, refrain from using doorknobs.
- For those whose work does not require office attendance, your supervisor will discuss work from home options with you.

#### Supplies in Offices:

- Each employee will be supplied with disinfectant wipes as needed.
- Instruct workers to use their own equipment, such as pens, staplers, headsets, and computers.
- Shared equipment should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

#### Meeting Spaces/ Protocols:

- All meetings to be held in areas where physical distancing can be maintained or for gatherings of 5 or more, consider meeting virtually.
- Abide by room capacity signage.
- Refrain from providing and consuming communal foods.
- Refrain from moving around furniture in common areas and classrooms unless it has been clearly moved to a non-compliant configuration.

#### Restroom Protocols:

- Every time you leave the restroom wash hands as per posted signage.
- Use paper towel to open door and then dispose of in garbage.

#### Staff Room and Community Coffee Areas:

- Wash hands before touching shared appliances and eating.
- Maintain social distancing when the space is shared.

#### Outside Visitors:

- Couriers: All parcels or items that are handled directly and immediately by staff will be disinfected. The receptionist will disinfect counter surfaces when the courier has direct physical contact with the surface.
- If required, visits to the workplace should be prearranged, staggered, and safety protocols should be communicated before entry into the workplace (e.g., email and/or signage posted to entrance).

- Keep a record of visitors to the workplace.
- Post signage at the workplace to inform everyone of the measures in place.
- When booking appointments, visitors should be reminded to reschedule if they experience symptoms typical of COVID-19 or are placed on self-isolation.
- Minimize non-essential in-person interaction between workers and visitors (e.g., use of virtual meeting tools, email, or telephone).
- Provide visitor-facing staff with hand sanitizer for their use only.
- Visitors should attend appointments alone and minimize time spent in waiting area before their appointments.
- Remove non-essential communal items, such as candy, magazines, and complimentary phone chargers.
- Beverages (coffee, tea, water) should not be offered at this time.
- Consider moving garbage cans in meeting spaces or offices to a more accessible location for visitors to dispose of used sanitizing wipes and other PPE.

#### Transportation:

- Non-essential transportation or business travel should be limited.
- Minimize the use of shared vehicles.
- Where possible, communicate using telephone, text message, or other communication technology.

#### Travel:

- Personal travel outside of British Columbia, is strongly discouraged at this time (speak to your supervisor if you have a personal circumstance that requires your presence).
- We expect all our employees to follow the BC government guidelines for travel at the time of their travel dates.
- It is mandatory that students, faculty, or staff arriving from outside of Canada stay home or self-isolate. Travelers must submit a [B.C. self-isolation plan](#) and complete the federal ArriveCAN application for approval prior to or upon arrival.
- If you are required to self-isolate upon return to BC and are unable to perform your work functions, the time missed will be considered banked or vacation time, unless otherwise discussed with your supervisor.

#### **For further information, please visit:**

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/careers/about-the-bc-publicservice/bc\\_public\\_service\\_covid19\\_response\\_faqs.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/careers/about-the-bc-publicservice/bc_public_service_covid19_response_faqs.pdf)



# Post Isolation/ Quarantine Return to Work Screening:

## Purpose

To provide guidance to ensure for the health and wellness of all Columbia Bible College staff and faculty.

## Procedure

Staff and faculty will complete daily self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19 before arriving on campus using a self-screening tool; <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en> .

Self-monitoring means paying close attention to how you feel to see if you develop any COVID-like symptoms such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, follow directions for testing and begin isolation. Any symptoms <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/symptoms-covid-19> identified means staff/faculty **cannot come to work**.

Begin to isolate by remaining home, arrange for working remotely which may include alternative instruction for classes or distribution of workload to others. Notify both your supervisor and the COVID Care Coordinator, [covid.care@columbiabc.edu](mailto:covid.care@columbiabc.edu) .

Wait for test results, keep isolating and follow recommendations from Public Health. Once test results are known, update both your supervisor and the COVID Care Coordinator with the results.

Refer to the resource for self-isolation post testing:

[https://columbiabc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Faculty/ESvzIMM7tS9Ouw22\\_XnaLyIBAwTzV07s3d\\_WG0dTJzvm0w?e=fE\\_vJ0o](https://columbiabc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Faculty/ESvzIMM7tS9Ouw22_XnaLyIBAwTzV07s3d_WG0dTJzvm0w?e=fE_vJ0o)

## Positive test results

Those who get diagnosed with COVID-19 will need to self-isolate for 10 -14 days from when their symptoms started. A public health nurse will contact those who test positive to identify people they have spent time with. These people are contacts who might need to be tracked to identify possible clusters of infections. Public health gets in touch with the contacts and asks them about symptoms of COVID-19.

Not every contact needs to be identified: only those who could have been exposed to the case's respiratory droplets from coughing, sneezing, or speaking.

To learn more about what to do if you are sick, how to prevent spreading it and what to do if you need medical care, visit: the [BC Centre for Disease Control's If you are sick](#) page.

Public Health resources recommend a return to work after 14 days from the onset of symptoms. However, that 14 days must include 3 days (72 hours) of no fever. A cough can last for a few weeks after recovery from Covid-19, but individuals are no longer considered contagious so long as the cough is the ONLY symptom.

Refer to the self-monitoring form to track onset and end of symptoms.  
[https://columbiabc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Faculty/EYUYo6lxjFhBsUoW-jMJ1fcBJqT-cJNbQdaT7eo6GJ40\\_Q?e=ya0ScE](https://columbiabc.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/Faculty/EYUYo6lxjFhBsUoW-jMJ1fcBJqT-cJNbQdaT7eo6GJ40_Q?e=ya0ScE)

### Negative test results

If your test is negative isolate until symptoms subside. Ill staff/faculty should not come to work even if symptoms are mild, if there is questions or concerns, contact HealthLinkBC ([8-1-1](tel:8-1-1)) .

If you became ill after being in contact with a confirmed case or arriving from outside of Canada, continue to self-isolate for 14 days or 10 days after symptoms started, whichever is longer.

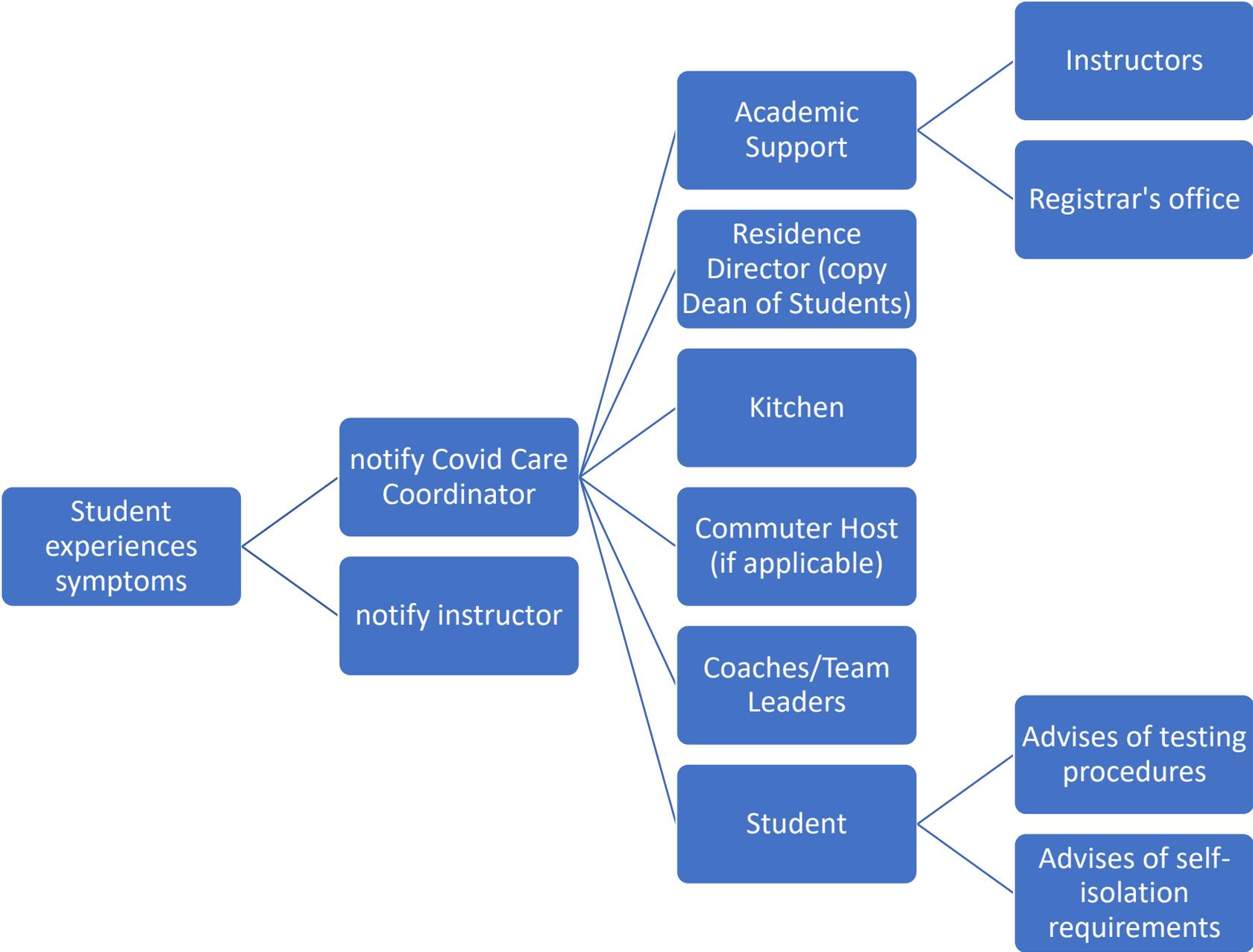
### Returning to work

Email your supervisor to update your plan to return at least 1 day prior to planned return to work following an isolation or quarantine period.

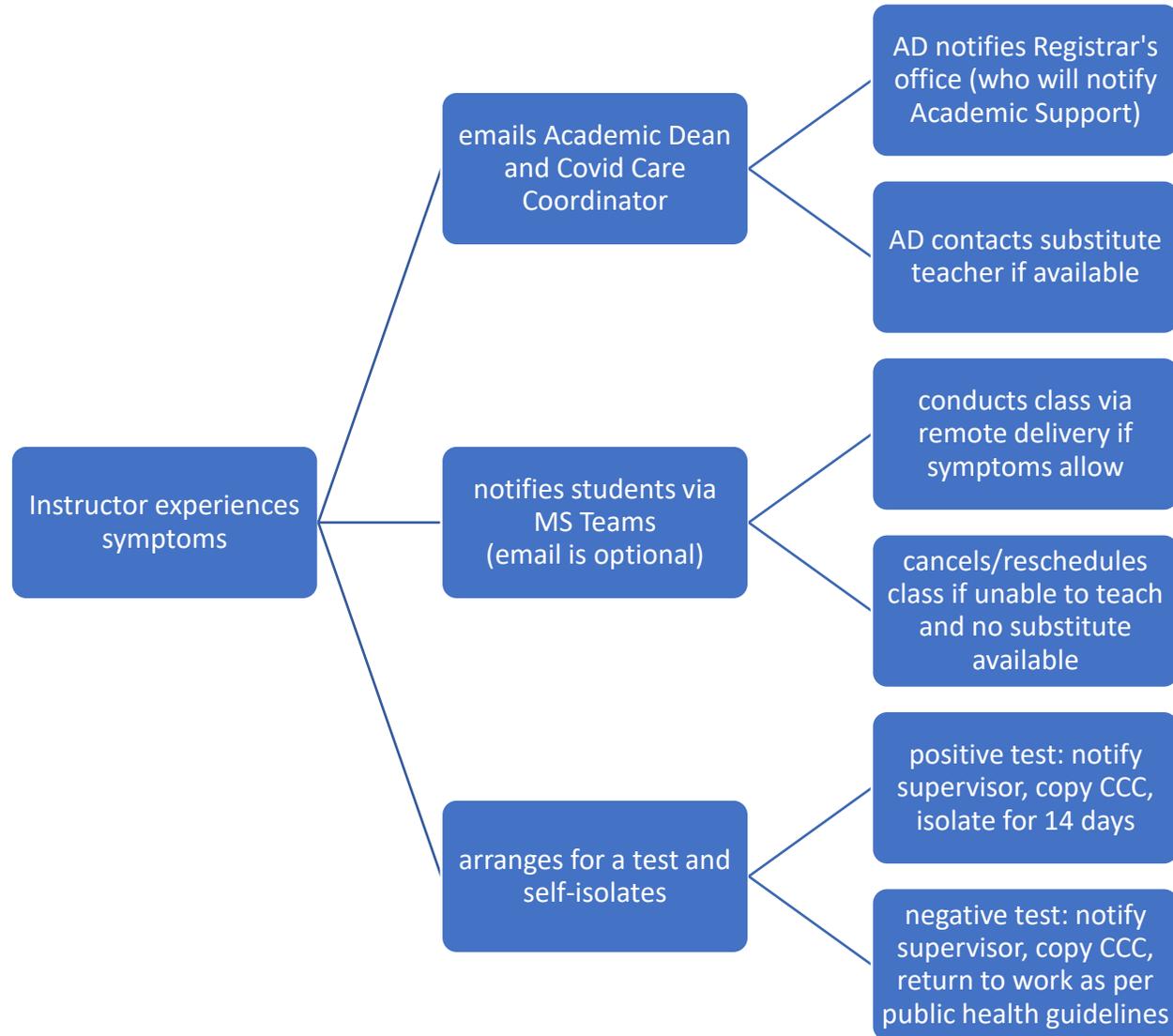
### To help reduce your risk of infection

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Using soap and water is the single most effective way of reducing the spread of infection because soap actively destroys the surface of the virus.
- If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) can be used to clean your hands as long as they are not visibly soiled.
- Wear a mask/face covering in public places.
- COVID-19 is spread through infected droplets from a sick person's mouth or nose. Wearing a mask or face covering, helps protect people around you from the droplets that carry the virus.
- If you cannot physically distance yourself from others, a mask can help prevent the spread of germs.
- Limit your time in common spaces.
- Greet people with a wave instead of a handshake, kiss or hug.
- Maintain physical and mental health, i.e. nutrition, getting enough sleep and exercise.

# COVID-19 Communication Flow (Students)



# COVID Communication Flow (Instructors)



# BC PUBLIC SERVICE COVID-19 RESPONSE FAQs

Updated August 5, 2020

## WHO TO CONTACT:

- For work-related questions not addressed in the FAQ, contact the Workplace Health & Safety branch (BC Public Service Agency) using [MyHR](#).
- In the case of a workplace safety emergency call 1-250-952-0911.
- For non-medical-related questions about COVID-19 including community protection and reporting options, call 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319). Service is available from 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. seven days a week.
- Call 811 or your primary care provider for personal medical advice following exposure or if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- For general health-related questions from Canadians, call 1-833-784-4397. Service is available from 7:00 a.m. to midnight EST.

For general information on COVID-19, see the BC Centre for Disease Control online resources at <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>.

If you think you may have symptoms, the BC Centre for Disease Control's self-assessment tool can help you determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19: <https://covid19.thrive.health>.

The most current information related to the BC Public Service's response to COVID-19 (including this document) is available [on the MyHR website](#).

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## Part 1: Workplace Safety and Working from Home

### 1. What are the next steps for the BC Public Service regarding workplaces?

Our workplaces are safe, as they have been throughout the pandemic. And together we will ensure they stay safe. Now that ministries are adapting their operations to support B.C.'s Restart Plan, [new resources](#) have been developed to help keep employees safe in the workplace.

New guidelines are available to help ministries use [a risk assessment](#) approach to identify workplace adaptations and safe work procedures to operate during the coming months, based on each given workplace, schedule, and overall operations.

As we move towards better workplace configurations, based on the best evidence available, the BC Public Service will apply the following principles:

- Follow the orders and direction of the Provincial Health Officer and the Solicitor General for COVID-19.
- Protect the health and safety of all public service staff.
- Protect clients from COVID-19 exposure from other clients and ministry staff.
- Make decisions based on the best science, evidence and policy advice available.
- Support ministries in creating new, safe ways to do business.
- Educate staff about the procedures and controls that are in place to make workplaces and work processes safe.

Public health guidance on physical distancing, personal and workplace hygiene practices has successfully limited the spread of COVID-19 in the community. Using these same practices in the workplace will provide protection for public and staff from the transmission of coronavirus.

To accommodate physical distancing requirements, workplaces will likely operate with reduced capacity and modified field duties for a minimum of six to 18 months.

Since the overall capacity of worksites will be reduced, ministries will have to prioritize critical positions that require attendance in the workplace. Your ministry will provide you with details of what this means for your workplace.

All ministries will need to balance working at home and working in the traditional worksite to achieve necessary physical distancing and delivery of public services.

Consistent with WorkSafeBC guidelines, if an employee's regular work can successfully be completed remotely, employees who choose to work remotely will continue to be supported to do so.

## 2. If more employees are returning to their usual workplace, what is being done to ensure the workplace is safe?

The Ministry of Citizens' Services and the BC Public Service Agency are working with each ministry to ensure appropriate steps are taken to ensure employee health and safety. This includes increased cleaning services and hygiene supplies and measures to promote effective physical distancing in the workplace.

If you are planning to return to your workplace, you can expect your ministry to communicate with you about the steps being taken and the expectations of employees to help ensure the workplace remains safe.

[More information is available on MyHR.](#)

## 3. What is meant by “physical distancing” and how can it be practiced in the workplace?

Physical distancing is an important way we can all help limit the spread of COVID-19 in the community. The recommendation for physical distancing is that people stay at least two metres apart and avoid prolonged close personal contact. COVID-19 is transmitted by an infected person coughing or sneezing droplets and someone breathes them in. Typically, droplets travel less than two metres. The droplet can also land on hard surfaces that we touch and then we touch our faces. Ways to practice physical distancing in the workplace include:

- Avoid shaking hands, wash your hands thoroughly, and stay home if you are sick.
- If you're having a conversation with someone in their office or cubicle, stay at the door to increase the distance.
- Use Skype or instant messaging rather than face-to-face conversations.
- If meeting with a group, use the largest room available and use every other seat around the table, or space yourselves apart. Observe the posted maximum COVID-19 occupancy for the room.
- Sit at least two metres apart in mobile work spaces.
- Use automatic door openers to avoid touching door handles.
- Wipe down shared surfaces in mobile work spaces, meeting rooms and common areas.
- When working with clients, where possible keep the two-metre distance by standing back slightly at a service counter if necessary.
- Don't share food, plates or cutlery in staff rooms.
- Ensure staff room dishes are well cleaned.
- Don't leave items on staff room counters and tables overnight so janitorial staff can properly wipe down the entire surface.

#### 4. How can we work with clients or the public to maintain physical distancing?

- Put up signs at entrances to remind clients that they should not attend the office or re-book their appointment if they are sick, have a cough, have difficulty breathing or have not completed a 14-day self-isolation after international travel.
- Have signs asking people to reduce the number of people in elevators to maintain physical distancing.
- Use signs to encourage social/physical distancing in lobbies and waiting rooms.
- When booking in-person meetings, add a reminder for clients about physical distancing and to reschedule if they feel unwell.
- Try to do virtual or phone meetings wherever possible.
- Set up meeting rooms with reduced capacity and use the table or chairs to create two metres between participants.
- Rearrange or remove some of the waiting room furniture to allow for physical distancing.
- Use tape to mark out two metres spacing on the floor for line ups and counter service.
- If clients appear unwell, ask them if they would reschedule.
- Ask clients to cover up if they are coughing or sneezing using their elbow or a tissue.
- Create the recommended two metres distance between yourself and clients at counters and in interview or meetings rooms.

#### 5. A worker with a chronic health condition has asked about returning to the workplace. What do I advise them?

The BCCDC advises that people with certain chronic health conditions may consider protective self separation. People with chronic health conditions are at a higher risk of developing more severe illness from COVID-19. These conditions include heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease, diabetes and cancer. Also included are people with weakened immune systems from a medical condition (e.g. HIV, chronic liver or organ transplant) or treatment, such as chemotherapy or immunosuppressive medications.

Limiting the job positions to only those that have a requirement to be performed at the workplace reduces overall exposure for the work unit.

Employees should be informed of new or updated workplace safety procedures before the return to the worksite. This allows employees with chronic conditions to evaluate the level of risk for their condition, and their confidence in protecting themselves in the workplace. With COVID-19, personal protective practices (distancing and hand hygiene) offer protection. These employees should be permitted to return to the workplace if they chose.

The diagnosis of an employee's medical condition is confidential. Supervisors can act on information that has previously been shared. If further assistance is required, contact MyHR.

**6. An employee requests to remain at home as someone in their household has a chronic health condition and they are worried about transmitting COVID-19 to them. Is there a medical basis for this concern?**

No, workplace safety procedures and standard hygiene precautions in the workplace are designed to protect staff from COVID-19. In addition, in controlled settings where employees with symptoms are not to come to work and clients are dealt with at a physical distance, this further reduces the risk of COVID-19.

Furthermore, all employees should practice regular hand hygiene to minimize the risks of transmission which includes when leaving work and when arriving home.

**7. Is it likely that building ventilation systems are a route of transmission for COVID-19?**

No, the Public Health Agency of Canada states that these viruses are not known to spread through ventilation systems or through water.

In recent weeks, some scientists have requested that the World Health Organization (WHO) consider the possibility of airborne spread.

[WHO](#) has acknowledged emerging evidence that coronavirus may be airborne and cites reported outbreaks of COVID-19 in some closed settings, such as restaurants, nightclubs, places of worship or places where people may be shouting, talking, or singing. In these outbreaks, aerosol transmission, particularly in these indoor locations where there are crowds and inadequately ventilated spaces where infected persons spend long periods of time with others, cannot be ruled out.

The WHO's conclusion was that more studies are urgently needed to investigate such instances and assess their significance for transmission of COVID-19.

In terms of how COVID-19 is most commonly transmitted, WHO reports that current evidence suggests that COVID – 19 spreads between people through direct, indirect (through contaminated objects or surfaces), or close contact with infected people via mouth and nose secretions.

Health information on the [BCCDC](#) website notes that Influenza and SARS are two examples of diseases capable of being transmitted from droplet contact, and currently, health experts believe that coronavirus can also be transmitted in this way.

Therefore, measures such as two-metre physical distancing, hand washing, and covering your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing continue to be effective methods for preventing COVID-19 infection.

This FAQ will be updated as more data on this topic becomes available.

**8. What is the BC Public Service doing to support employees who want to work from home and employees who have children at home due to the suspension of in-class learning in K-12 schools or unexpected closure of childcare programs?**

More people working from home helps support the physical distancing practices recommended by public health officials. Where it is operationally feasible, ministries are expected to encourage and support employees who want to work from home and should be flexible in considering alternative work arrangements, including requests to work from home and look after children. Where an employee working from home is also the primary child care provider, supervisors will work to explore options to accommodate an employee's needs while maintaining operational requirements to the extent possible.

Any decisions to deny working from home opportunities will be made at the ADM level. Where an employee is sick or taking any form of leave, they are expected to access their leave banks as per usual. No employee is required to work from home except those required to self-isolate due to travel or possible exposure to COVID-19.

Schools have re-opened on a part-time basis as of June 1. The government is also actively working [to ensure that as many daycare spaces as possible remain open](#) and essential services employees have access to spaces for their children. Ministries are also working on operational plans to safely continue services during this challenging time, including ministry-specific approaches to maintaining essential service staffing levels.

Resources on effective mobile working practices are available on the [MyHR website](#).

**9. How does the government's March 26 announcement regarding essential services impact BC Public Service employees?**

Under the provincial state of emergency, on March 26 government and the Provincial Health Officer identified essential services as those daily services essential to preserving life, health, public safety and basic societal functioning. This is distinct from essential service designations under the Labour Code and applies to the unique context of the COVID-19 response. The list of essential services includes all government functions and services.

These essential services should and are encouraged to remain open. They must, however, follow the orders and guidance provided by the Provincial Health Officer to ensure safe operations and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This is consistent with how the

BC Public Service has approached its response to the pandemic to date, and we will continue to adapt our approach as needed to adhere to the directions of the Provincial Health Officer.

This does not impact how most of us are working, and we continue to support and encourage employees to work from home where they wish and it is operationally feasible. However, as part of the essential services action government has also directed child care providers and schools providing care and/or in-class instruction for children to prioritize placements for those children whose parents are employed in Health and Health Services, Social Services, Law Enforcement, First Responders, and Emergency Response. See the [details of the essential services list](#) for details on which specific services are included in this group. Details on access to childcare spaces are still to be confirmed.

#### **10. Can employees working from home take IT equipment and office furniture home if needed to allow them to work effectively?**

Employees may temporarily take monitors, keyboards and other easily transported IT peripheral devices they need to work effectively at home. Similarly, with their supervisor's agreement, employees may take their work chairs home. Employees are expected to transport this equipment themselves and must exercise care to prevent both injury to themselves and damage to any government assets. In cases where employees are not able to transport the equipment themselves, they are requested to discuss the move arrangements with their supervisors. Branches are responsible for tracking any equipment employees take home and ensuring their return when employees return to their usual work arrangements.

Except for chairs, employees cannot take desks or other furniture home. If an employee requires a height-adjustable desk or other furniture as part of an accommodation agreement, the employee should be required to continue to work in the office as usual. Our workplaces remain safe for those employees continuing to work onsite. With more employees working from home, those who are in their regular workplaces are able to practice effective physical distancing measures and we have enhanced cleaning of workplaces to support employee safety.

Consistent with existing telework policies, the employer does not reimburse costs for utilities or office supplies employees use when choosing to work from home.

#### **11. Why were the masks provided in workplace earthquake kits removed and will they be replaced?**

At the request of Emergency Management BC, ministries collected N95 masks from earthquake kits to provide them to front line health care workers across B.C. to help ensure access to a continued supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) as the COVID-19 pandemic has increased demand around the world. The Ministry of Health and EMBC are

also working to procure PPE from other sources in B.C. that may have surplus supplies available.

While earthquake preparedness is important, B.C.'s front line health care workers have an urgent need for N95 masks for work that is central to keeping all of us safe. These masks are not required to be included in workplace earthquake kits by WorkSafeBC, but we will arrange to have them replenished as soon as possible after the COVID-19 response is complete.

**12. What are the considerations needed when planning for a work event or large meeting while there is the potential for exposure to COVID-19? If an event is already scheduled, should the event be cancelled?**

The Provincial Health Officer has ordered that all events being planned with over 50 people should be cancelled. This does not mean workplaces with more than 50 people need to close (see above for more on practicing physical distancing and other protection measures in the workplace).

In-person events or meetings with fewer than 50 people should only proceed if absolutely necessary to enable to essential work. Even small meetings should only happen in-person where physical distancing, cleaning and other hygiene measures can be applied. Wherever possible, virtual meeting options should be used. Anyone who is sick should stay home and not attend any event in person.

**13. Why is the use of personal masks different in various settings?**

The recommendation for using masks depends upon the risk level in the particular situation. In an office setting or a worksite where all employees are instructed to avoid the workplace if they have any symptoms, and the employer has implemented COVID-19 safety controls, the risk of exposure is much lower. This is compared to an uncontrolled setting such as a store or public transit where physical distancing cannot be maintained on a sustained basis, and the health status of individuals is not certain.

**14. How do we implement COVID-19 workplace safety controls in Leading Workplace Strategy (LWS) designed settings?**

Adapting to the new maximum staffing levels simply requires flexibility and spacing. While some adjustments to shared work surfaces are needed, the more fluid design of these spaces also allows more options to preserve the required physical distancing. Many of the practices outlined in the [new workplace safety guidelines](#) are applicable in an LWS work environment.

Safety in the workplace during this time of Covid-19, whether in a LWS environment or one that is traditionally planned, is highly dependent on prevention precautions such as ensuring physical distancing, hand-washing, sanitization of surfaces, staying away from work if feeling unwell, avoiding touching the face, etc. These are not space dependant but are reliant on employees' individual behaviours.

## Part 2: Employee Exposure and Self-Isolation

### **15. I have an employee who has tested positive for COVID-19. What does this mean for coworkers? Do we need to close that workplace?**

Any employee who is sick with COVID-19 symptoms must stay home and away from others.

In terms of co-workers, determine the level of interaction with the employee. Low risk exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case includes walking by the person or briefly being in the same room. If low risk, the co-workers should self-monitor for symptoms and practice good hand hygiene and social distancing in public, at home and at work.

Contact surfaces in both client and employee areas should be wiped down with a disinfecting cleaner. Remember that hand hygiene and not touching the face can stop the spread of infection. Public health officials will be in contact with the COVID-positive worker. Only co-workers who are “close contacts” are recommended to be in 14-day self-isolation.

If there are further safety questions about managing the worksite and operations, please contact MyHR.

### **16. I supervise an employee who has developed mild symptoms, but they are not sure if it is COVID-19. They are wondering if they should come in to work or go get tested. What should I do?**

Individuals who are sick should not be coming to work and potentially spreading disease to others.

Since April 23, testing guidelines have been updated to include testing any individuals with new respiratory or systemic (more generalized) symptoms compatible with COVID-19, however mild. This universal approach to testing symptomatic individuals is an important part of monitoring the impact of changing public health recommendations.

You can ask the employee if they have used the BC COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool at <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en>, and if not, this should be encouraged. This tool has been updated to include mild symptoms and provides advice to find the test collection centre in their area. The employee can also still contact 8-1-1 to find the nearest centre or for directions in another language.

Negative test results can be obtained by phone, text, or online at <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/testing/test-results>.

## 17. What does “close contact” mean?

For public health monitoring, a close contact is defined as a person who:

- Provided care for the case, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or who had other similar close physical contact without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment, OR
- Who lived with or otherwise had close prolonged\* contact (within 2 meters) with a probable or confirmed case while the case was ill, OR
- Had direct contact with the infectious body fluids of a probable or confirmed case (e.g. was coughed on or sneezed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.

\*As part of the individual risk assessment, public health will consider the duration of the contact’s exposure (e.g. a longer exposure time likely increases the risk), the case’s symptoms (coughing or severe illness likely increases exposure risk) and whether the exposure occurred in a health care setting.

## 18. When do I need to ask an employee for an STO2 form or doctor’s note?

In the circumstance of COVID-19 related absences, an STO2 form or certificate is not required for sick pay. Discussion between employee and supervisor can often resolve questions about prognosis.

On a temporary basis for other conditions, an STO2 may be required only for safety sensitive occupations or other essential services employees to enable the employer to meet their legislated obligations to plan and manage a safe return to work. The STO2 form permits management of clearance to safety sensitive occupations and assists managing the workforce with advice regarding prognosis. The STO2 form also provides consent for the clinical team at Occupational Health Programs to work with employees on safe and sustainable return to work programs.

## 19. I supervise an employee who is sick with a fever and new respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, runny nose). There is no travel history and no history of exposure to someone who was ill and travelled. What should I do?

The employee should self isolate and not be in the workplace in order to minimize the risk of infection to others. The employee should be advised to use the BC COVID-19 Self-

Assessment Tool which will in turn provide recommendations with COVID -19 testing. The employee should be placed on sick leave unless they are able to work from home.

Ending self-isolation:

- For employees who test positive for COVID-19, public health will be involved with contact tracing, management, and advice for when to end self isolation.
- For employees who test negative for COVID-19 and have symptoms of illness, they are to continue to isolate until their symptoms resolve.

\*There are caveats. Returning travellers to Canada must continue to isolate for 14 days from arrival back in BC. Close contacts of COVID-19 cases confirmed by public health must continue to self-isolate for 14 days from last contact with the case. Work settings where clients are resident may have other return to work policies.

For employees who don't have test results (declined testing, don't wish to disclose results), they can return to their routine activities, including work, once the following criteria are met:

- A. At least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms; AND
- B. Fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication; AND
- C. Symptoms (respiratory, gastrointestinal, and systemic) have improved.

Coughing after recovery may persist for several weeks and does not mean the individual is infectious and is not required to self isolate. Health care providers and other employees in residential settings should check with their supervisor about different return to work procedures.

**20. I supervise an employee who tells me they have been medically advised to stay home as they are sick with a communicable disease. Are they eligible for sick leave?**

Yes. If an employee has been advised by a medical professional to remain at home on self-isolation or isolation because they are sick (or in hospital for treatment), they are eligible for sick leave.

**21. I supervise an employee whose spouse or child (no travel or known contact) is sick with mild respiratory symptoms that can be managed at home. Should this employee self-isolate?**

Workers can use the information in the [BCCOVID-19 Symptoms Self Assessment Tool](#) and should review the definitions of probable and confirmed cases on the [Public Health Agency of Canada website](#). If the spouse or child meets the definition of probable or confirmed, then the employee would be recommended to self-isolate.

If the spouse or child doesn't meet the definition above, employees who wish to work from home should be encouraged to do so where operationally feasible. But there is no current public health recommendation for self-isolation in this situation. The employee can remain at work with a recommendation to self-monitor for symptoms and practice good personal hygiene and physical distancing in public, at home and at work.

**22. I have an employee who was given a medical recommendation to self-isolate for 14 days as a precautionary measure because of close contact to a person sick with COVID-19. This may be the employee's spouse or child. The employee is doing well, with no symptoms, and would like to return to work. What should I do?**

Individuals who have been medically recommended by a health care professional to self-isolate, will be asked to closely monitor for symptoms during their self-isolation and will have daily checklists to complete. This recommendation is given when there is exposure to a lab confirmed COVID-19 case or a case with travel exposure. At the end of the 14 days of self-isolation, and in the absence of symptoms, the health care provider/public health recommendation will end, and the worker can return to their usual routines.

**23. In the situation outlined in the previous question, what does this mean for co-workers? Do we need to close that workplace?**

The employee is self-isolating as a precaution, is not showing symptoms and therefore the co-workers only need to continue with current COVID-19 public health recommendations for all British Columbians, such as hand hygiene, social distancing, and staying home if sick.

Routine cleaning of surfaces is advised. Workplaces do not need to close early just so that routine cleaning can be done. Most people become ill from being in close contact with someone who showed symptoms such as coughing and sneezing, therefore transmitting the virus through droplets. In the case above, the employee is not coughing or sneezing and the risk to co-workers is low.

BCCDC reports there are a few instances of disease transmission before a person is showing significant symptoms. The recommended infection control practices of physical distancing, regular hand washing and not touching ones' face protect against this type of exposure.

In terms of surfaces that may have virus on it, routine cleaning with disinfectant kills the virus. In addition, if one happened to touch a contaminated surface, washing your hands kills the virus. Not touching your face with your hands can also stop your likelihood of picking up the virus.

**24. I can't work from home, but I am nervous about coming to work and being exposed to COVID-19. What can I do?**

The best thing we can all do is follow the steps recommended by the Provincial Health Officer to protect ourselves and others: wash your hands regularly and thoroughly, avoid touching your face, clean surfaces, and practice physical distancing measures.

See questions in Part 1 above for more information on how this can be done in your workplace and talk to your supervisor about your concern. If you follow these recommendations and the exposure control procedures for your workplace, the risk of contracting COVID-19 even through passing documents and other items back and forth between workers or clients is low.

If you commute to work on public transit, physical distancing and hand washing are effective preventative measures.

**25. I have an employee who wants to self-isolate. The employee doesn't have any COVID-19 symptoms, hasn't travelled out of Canada, and hasn't been directed by a medical professional to self-isolate. What are the options?**

Where it is operationally feasible, ministries are expected to encourage and support employees who want to work from home and should be flexible in considering alternative work arrangements.

The workplace safety guideline appendices provide a guideline for discussing return to work with employees. An open conversation about the barrier to return to work is important. It may arise from daycare, public transit concerns, family issues or apprehension. It is recommended supervisors use a coaching approach to support employees in problem solving the situation.

See other answers in this guide to manage the situations that are identified. If you need assistance in managing issues related to self-imposed isolation, contact MyHR.

**26. I have an employee who will be coming back to work after recovering from an active COVID-19 infection. That employee feels well and is not having any further symptoms. What should I do?**

An ST02 or doctors note is not required.

Employees who have mild respiratory symptoms that can be managed at home can return to their routine activities, including work, once the following criteria are met:

- a. At least 10 days have passed since onset of symptoms; AND
- b. Fever has resolved without use of fever-reducing medication; AND
- c. Symptoms (respiratory, gastrointestinal, and systemic) have improved.

Coughing may persist for several weeks and does not mean the individual is infectious and must self isolate.

Health care workers (nurses, doctors, care aides) and employees working in group living settings who recovered from COVID-19 infection may require specialized direction for return to work.

**27. I supervise an auxiliary employee who was required to self-isolate. Are they eligible for weekly indemnity benefits?**

Yes, all auxiliary employees are eligible for weekly indemnity benefits up to a maximum of 15 weeks under the same circumstances as an employee eligible for COVID-19 related STIIP. This is the case for COVID-19 related absences even if the auxiliary employee has not accumulated 400 hours of auxiliary seniority or has lost their auxiliary seniority.

In addition, auxiliary employees will not have the one-week benefit waiting period for COVID-19 related absences. This means that employees are eligible for weekly indemnity benefits immediately and will receive the benefit as quickly as possible.

**28. When an employee tells their supervisor that they have been exposed to COVID-19 and they have no symptoms, does that employee need to self-isolate?**

It is important to understand how the employee knows the source is a confirmed COVID-19 case. Cases can only be defined by a positive COVID-19 swab test or determined by a health care professional based on the pattern of symptoms, exposure history, and severity of illness.

Low risk exposures to a confirmed COVID-19 case include walking by the person, or briefly being in the same room. No precautions are recommended. Exposures that are not close contacts (see above) are recommended to self-monitor daily. Instructions on self monitoring are available from the BC Center for Disease Control <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Self-monitoring.pdf>. The person would only self-isolate and contact public health if they become symptomatic. Close contacts to an established COVID-19 case will be asked by public health to self-isolate and self-monitor daily.

If this arises while the employee is in the workplace, seat them alone in a board room or away from others while you contact MyHR for advice.

**29. Will wearing a personal (non-medical) mask provide enhanced protection for me from contracting COVID-19 in the workplace?**

Wearing a non-medical mask (for example a homemade cloth mask) in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. Non-medical masks alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. The best steps to protect yourself are to consistently and strictly adhere to good hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical distancing.

Physical distancing is designed to protect us from someone who is symptomatic (coughing, sneezing) with COVID-19. On April 6, Dr. Henry, BC's Provincial Health Officer, stated the following about the use of non-medical masks:

*"We've been reviewing evidence from around the world. It's not a recommendation — it's a permissive use, if you will. This virus can't jump six feet. When you're outside, maintaining physical distance works, and we've seen that here in B.C.*

*A handmade cloth face-covering that we've seen people using in other places — for short term, they can protect others around you from your droplets. So, it's not going to protect you from getting this virus. But, in the short term, it is a similar analogy to coughing into your sleeve or coughing into your tissue."*

Wearing a non-medical mask may help protect others around you by preventing your respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. Just like the recommendation not to cough into your hands (instead, cover your cough with tissues or your sleeve, then wash your hands), a mask can reduce the chance that others are coming into contact with your respiratory droplets.

Wearing a non-medical mask is NOT a replacement for physical distancing, hand washing and monitoring your health. If you feel unwell do not put on a mask and attend the workplace – instead, stay home and self-isolate for 10 days (refer to the advice above for information about returning to work).

In a workplace that is practicing physical distancing, the use of a non-medical face mask may impede communications, causing the wearer to raise their voice, creating more droplets that create a damp mask that needs to be replaced and safely discarded. Clients with moderate levels of hearing impairment may have difficulties understanding communications from staff wearing a mask. Clients may believe that a staff member wearing a mask is sick and request someone that is not wearing a mask.

While the above is applicable for most office-based and client-focused work, individual ministries may adopt different approaches for masks and transmission control measures based on the work being performed. Non-medical masks are not required personal protective equipment for employees and are not provided by the employer.

If you choose to use a non-medical face mask:

- You should wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (in addition to practicing good hand hygiene while wearing it).
- It should fit well (non-gaping).
- You should not share it with others.
- You should still practice social distancing of two metres.

Face masks can become contaminated on the area that you breathe through, including the outside, or when touched by your hands. When wearing a mask, take the following precautions to protect yourself and others:

- Avoid touching your face mask while using it.
- Change a mask by only touching the straps or ear-loops, as soon as it gets damp or soiled by putting it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine and then disposed of. Cloth masks can be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing a mask.
- Non-medical masks that cannot be washed should be discarded and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled. Dispose of masks properly in a lined garbage bin.
- Do not place a used non-medical mask on any work surface, common area or equipment. There is a potential risk of infection due to droplet transfer.
- Continue physical distancing and wash your hands often.

**30. I have an employee who attended a public event where another attendee was subsequently confirmed as having COVID-19 infection with testing. Should my employee be required to self-isolate and do other staff in the same work location need to take any precautions?**

No. If the employee does not have symptoms, they do not need to self-isolate. The employee can self monitor for symptoms for 14 days. Staff in the same work location as the employee do not need any additional precautions. As usual, hand washing, not touching faces, cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, cough/sneeze etiquette, and staying home if one is sick should be promoted at every opportunity.

The exception is when the public event is part of an investigation of a cluster or outbreak lead by public health and if there is a medical recommendation for all attendees to self-isolate. Public health officials will be involved with COVID-19 positive case management and contact tracing.

### Part 3: Employee Exposure Related to Travel

**31. [UPDATED] Now that we are in Phase 3 of B.C.'s Restart Plan, can employees resume work-related travel? Should employees still cancel work-related travel plans to minimize risk of exposure?**

The Provincial Health Officer still recommends B.C. residents avoid all non-essential travel outside Canada. If an employee travels anywhere outside Canada, they must self-isolate for 14 days upon return to Canada.

Effective March 30, 2020, the federal government has also ordered that no one with symptoms related to COVID-19 will be allowed to board domestic flights or rail transportation.

Given the constantly changing context, we recommend virtual meeting options to replace travel where possible.

Employees who choose to take personal international travel unrelated to work after August 5, 2020 will not be eligible for STIIP or Weekly Indemnity Benefits for their self-isolation period.

**32. My domestic partner, spouse or family returned from travel outside of Canada on or after March 12, 2020 and they do not have any symptoms. Do I need to self-isolate for 14 days if I have not travelled myself?**

No, the self-isolation order after travel is designed to stop the potential spread of COVID-19 should a returning traveler have had an exposure from abroad. Employees that have not travelled can continue to participate in the workplace and as usual should self-monitor for the development of COVID-19 symptoms.

If the partner, spouse or family member then develops illness within the 14 days of self-isolation, the employee should leave the workplace and contact their supervisor. If operationally feasible, modified work can be offered otherwise the employee will be placed on sick leave for a 14-day self-isolation period. Public health officials will have further advice for family members and the employee.

**33. An employee refuses to comply with the PHO/Federal Minister of Health [order](#) to self-isolate for 14 days following travel. They insist they can return to the workplace. How do I advise them?**

On March 25th, 2020, an [Emergency Order](#) under the Quarantine Act was implemented that requires any person entering Canada by air, sea or land to quarantine (self-isolate) themselves for 14 days whether or not they have symptoms of COVID-19.

Employees are expected to comply with this order and will not be permitted to return to work until the 14 days have elapsed. During this time, they can work from home or access sick leave. Contact MyHR if you have questions about the application of the order to employees who are essential workers.

In accordance with the federal Minister of Health's Emergency Order under the Quarantine Act, employees returning from outside Canada, including the United States, must self-isolate for 14 days to observe for any developing symptoms in order to help prevent the spread of the disease. If the employee becomes ill during isolation, they should contact 811 or their health care provider to manage their symptoms and describe their travel history. They can also contact public health in their local health region. The employee should inform the supervisor if they are going to be absent more than 14 calendar days and in advance of any return to work.

**34. [UPDATED] I have an employee entering self-isolation following return from travel, or who was medically recommended to self isolate for 14 days due to possible COVID-19 exposure. What options can the employer offer?**

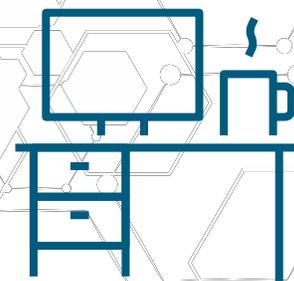
For employees returning from international travel, if you are satisfied your employee can effectively work from home, you should authorize this arrangement.

If the employee is returning from international travel that commenced before August 5, 2020 and cannot work from home, the employee is eligible for STIIP or Weekly Indemnity Benefits.

If the employee is returning from international travel commenced after August 5, 2020, 2020 and cannot work from home, they are not eligible for STIIP or Weekly Indemnity Benefits and must take applicable leave.

If the employee was medically recommended to self-isolate for 14 days due to possible COVID-19 exposure, and they cannot work from home, you should put the employee under STIIP (Short Term Illness and Injury Plan) for the duration of the self-isolation.

# PREVENTING COVID-19 IN THE WORKPLACE: EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEES AND ESSENTIAL SERVICE WORKERS



Across Canada, we are taking extraordinary steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For some workplaces, this may mean changing or limiting their hours of operation, or even closing for a period of time. Many employees have been told to stay at home, and others have been asked to work from home, while still others are asked to continue to go to work because their jobs are essential to keeping Canada functioning during this outbreak.

Essential workers are considered critical to preserving life, health and basic societal functioning. This includes, but is not limited to, first responders, health care workers, critical infrastructure workers, hydro and natural gas, and workers who are essential to supply society by critical goods such as food and medicines.

While all employees should continue to practice **physical distancing** and **hygiene** in their personal lives, we also need to take additional measures to protect important workplaces and employees, who are providing essential services. Employers and employees will need to work together to protect the health of employees and clients, and to keep the workplace delivering its essential services.

**Employers should use the risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces/businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## For all employees

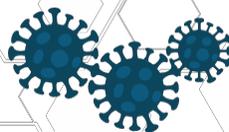
All employees should ensure they understand and comply with the infection prevention policies and practices in place in their workplaces.

### Keep your hands clean

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm. Avoid touching surfaces people touch often.
- Instead of a handshake, give a friendly wave or elbow bump.
- Use any necessary personal protective equipment, as directed.

### Keep your environment clean

- Use appropriate **products to clean and disinfect** items like your desk, work surface, phones, keyboards and electronics, cash registers, keypads, elevator buttons, customer service counters and restaurant tables more often, especially when visibly dirty. If they can withstand the use of liquids for disinfection, frequently touched electronics such as phones, computers and other devices may be disinfected with 70% alcohol (e.g. alcohol prep wipes).



### Keep your distance

- Keep a distance of 2 metres between you, your coworkers, and customers.
- Increase distance between desks, tables and workstations.
- Reduce activities that require close physical proximity or contact with people, such as team meetings.
- Limit any contacts closer than 2 metres to the shortest time possible.

### If you have a symptom of COVID-19

- If you think you might have COVID-19, use our [self-assessment tool](#) to find out what to do.
- It is critical that, if you have one symptom of COVID-19 (fever, cough or difficulty breathing), or even mild symptoms, you should stay home to avoid spreading illness to others.
- If you develop even mild [symptoms](#) while at your workplace, separate yourself from others and go home, avoiding use of public transit (e.g. buses, train, taxi) if possible.
- Contact your local [Public Health Authority](#) and follow their advice.
- If you are concerned about your financial stability during this time, the Government of Canada is providing assistance.

## For employers

Establish policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace and make sure these are communicated and understood by employees.

- Use the risk-informed decision-making [guidelines for workplaces/businesses](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Increase communication to staff and your customers about COVID-19 and measures you are taking for prevention.
- Post signs asking ill clients or customers to stay away from the workplace.
- Post signs encouraging good respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and other healthy practices
- Where feasible, adjust policies and procedures to reduce social contact, such as teleworking arrangements, flexible hours, staggering start times, use of email and teleconferencing.

- Cancel or postpone all non-essential meetings or travel.
- Evaluate the workplace for areas where people have frequent contact with each other and share spaces and objects, and increase the frequency of cleaning in these areas.
- Consider ways that employees can practice physical distancing, such as increasing distance between desks, people in line-ups and workstations.
- Consider minimizing interactions between customers and your employees, such as limiting the number of customers permitted in your establishment or serving customers over the phone. Ideally, a 2 metre separation should be maintained, unless there is a physical barrier (e.g. cubicle, Plexiglas window).

Provide the necessary facilities and cleaning products to maintain a clean and safe workplace

- Provide access to handwashing facilities and place hand sanitizing dispensers in prominent locations throughout the workplace.
- Ensure that high traffic work areas or frequently touched surfaces are cleaned and disinfected more often. Ensure that cleaning supplies are available for employees to clean and disinfect their workspaces.
- Provide employees with any personal protective equipment recommended by occupational health and safety guidelines, and training to ensure it is used correctly.

Make sure employees know what to do when they have symptoms

- Consider relaxing sick leave policies for employees who are ill. This includes suspending the need for medical notes to return to work, as it reduces the burden on an already stressed health care system.
- If employees must use public transportation to come to work, consider flexible hours to allow them to avoid peak travel periods.
- Consider how employees will return home without using public transit if they develop symptoms at work.
- Prepare for increases in absenteeism due to illness among employees and their families or possible school closures.

## Work-related travel

- Non-essential travel should not occur at this time.
- Consider the risks and benefits related to any upcoming essential travel and evaluate other options, such as postponing, cancelling or participating virtually.
- Check the latest information on affected areas and any **travel health notices**.
- When you return from any travel outside Canada, you must self-isolate for 14 days.
- When you return from travel within Canada, monitor yourself for **symptoms**, such as a cough, fever or difficulty breathing for 14 days.
- If you develop even mild **symptoms**, such as cough, fever or difficulty breathing, **isolate yourself** at home and contact your local **Public Health Authority** for further instructions.

- Certain persons who cross the border regularly to ensure the continued flow of goods and essential services, or individuals who receive or provide other essential services to Canadians, are exempt from needing to quarantine (self-isolate) due to travel outside of Canada, as long as they are asymptomatic (do not have symptoms of COVID-19).

### You must:

- practice physical (social) distancing
- self-monitor for symptoms
- stay in your place of residence as much as possible
- follow the instructions of your local public health authority if you feel sick

**WE CAN ALL DO OUR PART IN  
PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF  
COVID-19.**  
**FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT**

Canada.ca/coronavirus or contact 1-833-784-4397