



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



COVID-19 Guidance for Provincial Information and Support Officers

Provincial Coronavirus Response
April 9, 2020

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.



Ministry of
Health



BC Centre for Disease Control



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A. Introduction

This document provides interim guidance for preventing the transmission of COVID-19 from travelers to provincial information and support officers working at international points of entry.

For up-to-date information on COVID-19, please refer to the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>.

Orders, Notices and Guidance from the Government of Canada and BC's Provincial Health Officer:

On March 18, 2020, the Government of Canada instructed airlines to redirect international passenger flights to four Canadian airports:

- Toronto Pearson International Airport;
- Vancouver International Airport;
- Montreal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport; and
- Calgary International Airport¹.

As of March 19, 2020, air carriers with flights coming into Canada are required to do a basic health assessment of all air travelers before they board a flight. This includes the operator asking simple health questions and looking for visible signs of illness prior to boarding. In the event a traveler presents with COVID-19 symptoms, the air carrier is required to refuse to board the passenger for travel for a period of 14 days and a demonstration that the traveler is non-symptomatic, or until a medical certificate is presented that confirms the patient does not carry the virus¹.

As of March 25, 2020, all travelers arriving in Canada must self-isolate (quarantine) and monitor for symptoms for 14 days under the *Quarantine Act*. Learn more about the Government of Canada's travel restrictions and exemptions here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/latest-travel-health-advice.html#f>

To limit the spread of COVID-19, the Provincial Health Officer has issued an Order that anyone who has travelled outside of Canada on or after March 12, 2020 must stay at home and self-isolate for 14 days. The Order outlines conditions and provides specific direction for isolation, non-essential travel and travel for essential workers: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/reports-publications/covid-19-pho-class-order-travellers.pdf>

As of April 8, 2020, international travelers (including from the United States) coming to B.C. are required to provide a self-isolation plan before or upon arrival to B.C., regardless of their point of entry to Canada.

As of April 10, 2020, provincial information and support officers will be on hand at Vancouver International Airport and major land border crossings to make sure self-isolation plans are complete and to assist those who need it.

B. General Information

How is COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 is spread through large liquid droplets when a person infected with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes. The virus in these droplets can enter through the eyes, nose or mouth of another person if they are in close contact with the person who coughed or sneezed.
- COVID-19 is not transmitted through particles in the air and is not something that can enter the body through the skin.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and the common cold. These symptoms include coughing, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing.

- People infected with COVID-19 may experience little or no symptoms, with illness ranging from mild to severe.
- Some people are more vulnerable to developing severe illness or complications from COVID-19, including older people and those with chronic health conditions.

Who needs to self-isolate?

- All travellers arriving in Canada (see Orders, Notices and Guidance section of this document).
- People who are contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case, meaning they have been or could have been exposed to the virus, but do not have symptoms.
- Self-isolation means staying home and avoiding situations where you could come in contact with others. You may have been exposed to the virus and are at risk for developing COVID-19 and passing it on to others.
- You may NOT self-isolate in a place where you will be in contact with vulnerable people, such as seniors and individuals with underlying health conditions.

For more information about COVID-19 self-isolation, please see:

- <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation>
- http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Self-isolation_dos_donts.pdf

General Precautions

- Stay at home if you are sick to avoid spreading illness to others.
- Practice diligent hand hygiene at all times.
 - Wash your hands regularly with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
 - Antibacterial soap is NOT required for COVID-19.
- Practice cough etiquette. Cough into your elbow or cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you sneeze. Immediately dispose of all used tissues in an appropriate waste bin and wash your hands right away.
- Maintain a physical distance of two metres from others at all times: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/physical-distancing>
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not share food, drinks, utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices, joints or bongs.
- Post signs to encourage hand hygiene among all staff and travellers: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/signage-posters>
- Put up signage promoting physical distancing: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_PhysicalDistancingPoster.pdf
- Encourage staff to avoid touching personal items of travellers, such as luggage and carry-on.

C. Infection Prevention and Control

COVID-19 risks for border staff, provincial information and support officers and other workers at international points of entry are considered low.

- Health checks are in place at all outbound airports, land, rail and marine ports to screen passengers prior to boarding^{2,3}.
- Passengers showing signs of COVID-19 will be denied boarding on all domestic and international outbound flights.
- Airplane passengers are required to notify the cabin crew if symptoms develop during the flight⁴.
- When crossing the border, Customs Border Services Agency (CBSA) officers conduct an initial screening of travellers. Anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms is referred by CBSA officers to a Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) staff member for further evaluation⁵.

Personal Protection

- Given the low risk, border protection officers, provincial information and support officers and other workers at international ports of entry do not need special precautions, beyond those already used to protect these workers from the hazards they encounter during their normal course of business.
- Provincial information and support officers should not enter a room where a traveler with suspected COVID-19 has been isolated.
- Provincial information and support officers should not be in close proximity to a potentially infected traveller for a prolonged period of time.

- Provincial information and support officers are not responsible for providing surgical masks or hand sanitizer to travellers.
- Provincial information and support officer protection strategy for COVID-19:
 - Frequent and diligent handwashing with plain soap and warm water or hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
 - Physical distancing should be practised wherever possible. Plexiglass partitions and spacing markers on the floor (2 meters apart) would strongly support physical distancing in these settings.
 - Travellers and provincial information and support officers should be encouraged to practice cough etiquette at all times. This includes coughing into one's elbow or sneezing into a tissue that is immediately discarded in an appropriate waste bin, followed by hand washing. Tissues and waste bins should be made available to support this activity.
 - Provincial information and support officers should be instructed not to touch their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on to others by touching or handling paper.
 - Those who handle paper must wash their hands frequently with soap and water or hand sanitizer. This includes washing hands before any breaks, at the end of a shift, and before preparing food.
 - Provincial information and support officers should clean and disinfect their workstations at least two times each day.
 - Provincial information and support officers should be instructed not to share food, drinks, utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices, joints or bongs.
 - Signage should be put up to promote hand washing, physical distancing and coughing etiquette.

D. Communication, Signage and Posters

Signage and posters can be useful as a guide for guests and staff regarding infection prevention and control measures in your facility.

- Information and posters for **handwashing** are located on the BCCDC website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/hand-washing>
- Information and posters for **respiratory/cough etiquette** are located here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/hand-washing>
- Information and posters for **self-isolation and self-monitoring**: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation>

E. Staff Health

Provide information to staff on the following topics relating to COVID-19:

- Advise staff to report respiratory illness to their employer and do not return to work for at least 10 days following the onset of cough, fever, fatigue, sore throat, runny nose, difficulty breathing and/or shortness of breath.
- Advise staff to use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool at [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to help determine if further assessment or testing for COVID-19 is needed; contact 8-1-1 if further health advice is required; and 9-1-1 if it is an emergency.
- If an employee reports they are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 and have been at the workplace, clean and disinfect all areas where that person has worked.

References

1. Transport Canada. "Aviation measures in response to COVID-19".
<https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/initiatives/covid-19-measures-updates-guidance-tc/aviation-measures.html>
2. Transport Canada. "COVID-19 safety requirements for commercial passenger vessels and ferries".
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3. Transport Canada. "Interim Order to Prevent Certain Persons from Boarding Flights to Canada due to COVID-19, No. 4". <https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/mediaroom/interim-order-prevent-certain-persons-boarding-flights-canada-covid-19-no-4.html>
4. Transport Canada. "COVID-19: Guidance material for air operators managing travellers during the check-in procedure at international airports". <https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/initiatives/covid-19-measures-updates-guidance-tc/covid-19-guidance-material-air-carriers-managing-travellers-check-in-procedure-international-airports.html>
5. Canada Border Services Agency. "Statement from John Ossowski, President of the Canada Border Services Agency". <https://www.canada.ca/en/border-services-agency/news/2020/03/statement-fromjohn-ossowski-the-president-of-the-canada-border-services-agency.html>