

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Guidelines for Public Washrooms and Showers



On March 26, 2020, the province declared that public washrooms and showers are deemed to be essential services.

WHAT is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory infection caused by a newly identified virus. The infection has symptoms similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold: cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing. Other symptoms can include fatigue, muscle aches, diarrhea, headache or lost sense of smell. While most people infected with COVID-19 experience only mild illness, severe illness can occur in some people, especially in those with weaker immune systems, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions.

HOW is COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19 is spread through liquid droplets when an infected person 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.

WHERE to get more information about COVID-19

The province of British Columbia has created a phone service to provide non-medical information about COVID-19 which is available from 7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m. at 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319) or via text message at 604-630-0300.

More information on COVID-19 can also be found online:

- Vancouver Coastal Health <http://www.vch.ca/covid-19>
- BC Centre for Disease Control <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

Should public washrooms and showers be kept open during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes—the province has identified the need for people, especially unsheltered persons, to have access to public washrooms and hygiene facilities.

What precautions should be taken to minimize spread of COVID-19 through public washrooms and showers?

For public showers: clean and disinfect high-touch areas and any surfaces that may have been in contact with body fluids between each use.

For public washrooms: clean and disinfect high-touch areas and any surfaces that may have been in contact with body fluids at least 2 times daily, but every 2-4 hours if possible or when visibly contaminated. In certain communities, i.e., rural and suburban communities, cleaning schedules may vary depending on frequency of facility use.

To clean and disinfect:

1. Clean surfaces and remove any visible contamination using household detergent or soap and water.
2. Make a diluted bleach solution (15 ml/1 tbsp bleach to 1 litre of water) or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol. Standard disinfectant products may also be used as per manufacturer's directions.
3. Spray or wipe disinfectant on high-touch areas.
4. Allow to sit for at least 3 minutes before wiping down.

High-touch surfaces include: counters, doorknobs, handles, support beams, bathroom fixtures, shelving units or ledges, toilets, and shower heads.

How can workers protect themselves when cleaning and maintaining their public washrooms and showers?

Staff who clean and maintain public washrooms and showers should:

- Wear personal protective equipment (PPE), if possible (e.g. gloves, mask, eye protection) when cleaning and disinfecting to prevent direct contact with any body fluids.
- After cleaning washrooms or shower facilities:
 - Remove and dispose of gloves, mask, and other PPE.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.