

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19): Updated Guidance for Physicians and Patients

Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and its partners continue to monitor the novel coronavirus situation (COVID-19). To date, seven cases have been identified in BC including four in VCH. The four VCH cases are now recovered and the three additional BC cases are recovering at home. The overall risk to the public in BC remains low.

The Public Health Agency of Canada guidance for COVID-19 testing has been updated based on the changing epidemiology of the virus around the world. Any physician in VCH can order a test for COVID-19, based on your clinical assessment. As rapid access to testing is now available throughout our region, **it is no longer necessary to call the MHO** before ordering a test. However, we will follow up any positive results and are available for consultation, if needed.

The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends COVID-19 testing for:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Patients with compatible symptoms (e.g. fever, cough or difficulty breathing) AND 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel within 14 days of symptom onset to an affected area including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mainland China ○ Hong Kong ○ Iran ○ Italy 	OR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AND No clear alternative diagnosis 		

If you decide to test, please advise the patient to self-isolate until they receive a negative test result (See patient handout on page 2). **Patients may access their test results by calling the BC Centre for Disease Control COVID results hotline at 1-833-707-2792** (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm).

For all patients tested:

- Offer them a surgical mask and place them in a separate room.
- Use contact and droplet precautions during sample collection. An N95 respirator is NOT necessary.
- Obtain a nasopharyngeal and/or throat swab using a red or blue topped COPAN swab with UTM (pictured below)
- Send samples to the BCCDC Provincial Laboratory and ensure that the requisition indicates testing for “novel coronavirus”



Discharge planning:

- If the patient is well enough to return home, discharge the patient with a surgical mask and advise the patient to isolate at home until they receive a test result. Please give the patient the information on self-isolation and results phone number on the next page.
- If results are positive, VCH Public Health will be notified immediately and will follow up directly with the patient and any contacts

You can reach a Medical Health Officer at 604.675.3900 Toll free at 1.855.675.3900
 For public health emergencies after hours contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893

Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officers

Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Patricia Daly

Vancouver: Dr. John Harding, Dr. Althea Hayden, Dr. Dr. Mark Lysyshyn, Dr. Michael Schwandt 604.675.3900

Richmond: Dr. Meena Dawar 604.233.3170 | North Shore: Dr. Mark Lysyshyn 604.983.6701 | Coastal Rural: Dr. Geoff McKee 604.983.6701

To receive Physicians' Updates by email please contact us at: <mailto:VCHPhysiciansUpdate@vch.ca>

Information for patients being tested for novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and cared for in the community

Your doctor has determined that you can safely be cared for at home. To prevent the spread of contagious respiratory illnesses including novel coronavirus, we advise that you **self-isolate at home** until your test results are complete.

Your coronavirus test results will be available within the next 2-3 days. You may call the BC Centre for Disease Control Results Hotline for your test results at 1-833-707-2792 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm)

Instructions for self-isolation:

- 1) Stay home while you are sick** – Just as when you have the flu, you should stay home when you are sick. Do not go to work, or school. Cancel non-urgent appointments. However, you can still leave home for essential purchases, such as getting groceries. If you do go out while you are still sick, it is best if you wear a mask (see point #2 below). Your doctor may provide you with a note excusing you from work or school.
- 2) Wear a face mask** – Wear a face mask when you are in the same room with other people and when you visit a health care facility. If your mask gets wet or dirty, change it. Please note: A face mask refers to a surgical/procedure mask. N95 respirator masks are not required by the patient or household contacts.
- 3) Separate yourself from other people in your home** – Stay and sleep in a well-ventilated room separate from other people. Use a separate bathroom if available. Use a face mask in shared spaces. Household members should stay in another home or place of residence if possible. Restrict visitors. However, it is ok to have friends/family drop off food or you can use delivery/pick up services for errands such as grocery shopping.
- 4) Do not prepare food for others in your household**
- 5) Avoid sharing household items** - Do not share dishes, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding, or other items with people in your home. After using these items, wash them thoroughly with soap and water.
- 6) Cover your coughs and sneezes** – Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough/sneeze, or cough/sneeze into your sleeve instead of your hand. Throw used tissues into a lined trash can in your room before disposal with other household waste. Immediately wash your hands.
- 7) Wash your hands** – Wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use disposable paper towels when possible. For more information on handwashing see <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthlinkbc-files/hand-washing>. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based sanitizer, however, always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- 8) Flush toilet with the lid down** – the virus may also be present in stool.
- 9) Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces** – Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g. counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables) once per day with regular household disinfectant or a solution containing 1 part bleach to 9 parts water.
- 10) Notify health care facilities before you visit** – Call ahead before visiting a health care facility, and advise them that you have or are being tested for novel coronavirus. Also be sure to inform health care providers when you arrive. This will help health care facilities to take steps to keep other people from becoming infected.
- 11) Monitor your symptoms** – Seek medical attention if you have trouble breathing, are unable to tolerate fluids, or if your illness is worsening. Notify health care facilities and health care providers (e.g. emergency departments, ambulance paramedics, doctor's offices) before you visit.

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