



Office of the
Provincial Health Officer



BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority

Recommendations to Post-Secondary Institutions Regarding 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Provincial Coronavirus Response
Feb. 21, 2020

To Post-Secondary Institution Leadership and Administrators

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 **Hubei Province, China** stay home or self-isolate in their dorm/room alone for 14 days after they left Hubei. 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 parts of mainland China (outside Hubei Province)** should monitor themselves daily for symptoms (fever, cough, muscle aches, difficulty breathing) for 14 days after they left China. 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 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. University and college administrators, faculty and staff are not expected to enforce or monitor them.

The Provincial Health Officer asks the public and the post-secondary institution community not to make assumptions about the risk of students, faculty or staff based on their ethnicity or travel history.

Recommendations for Post-Secondary Institutions to Facilitate Self-Isolation

Given that students, faculty, or staff who are self-isolating may rely on post-secondary services (for example housing or food), institutions should plan for how they will support those in self-isolation. If your institution has a pre-existing plan for pandemic influenza, it may have protocols and guidance that can be adapted.

Those who are self-isolating are doing so for the benefit of others. Please support continuing instruction (e.g. deadline extension or alternative coursework that can be completed from self-isolation) and create a non-punitive environment for those who are self-isolating.

Advice on Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning and disinfecting objects and surfaces that are frequently touched by multiple students or staff (e.g., high touch surfaces such as doorknobs, faucet handles, computer keyboards, etc.) will help to prevent the transmission of viruses from person to person through contaminated hands. If household or commercial disinfection products are not readily available, hard surfaces can be cleaned of visible dirt and then disinfected using a mixture of 1-part bleach and 9-parts water.

Institutions should also consider increasing the number of hand wash stations (or alcohol-based sanitizer stations) around the institution, as well as providing tissues and waste receptacles.

Advice on School Events, Outings and Trips

It is not necessary to cancel classes, school events, outings or field trips to public locations. Trips including educational exchanges or student rotations to China are not recommended at this time. Up-to-date information on travel advisories to China can be found here: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice/210>

Advice for student health services and health care facilities on campus

The BC Centre for Disease Control has information for health professionals on COVID-19, including guidance on testing of suspected cases, information on personal protective equipment (PPE) use in health care facilities, and signage for clinics. It can be accessed at [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/novel-coronavirus-\(covid-19\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/novel-coronavirus-(covid-19)).

Further Questions?

Medical Health Officers are available to support post-secondary institutions throughout the province. Their role is to undertake communicable disease risk assessments and provide guidance on risk management. If you have concerns, please contact a Medical Health Officer from your Health Authority for assistance (visit www.bccdc.ca/contact for Medical Health officer contact information for each Health Authority).

Additional information on COVID-19 is available on the BC Centre for Disease Control website at: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>. It will be updated regularly so we encourage you to check it frequently.

