

oneVCH COVID-19 Special Bulletin

January 5, 2022

COVID-19 TESTING AND SELF-ISOLATION FOR HEALTH-CARE WORKERS

GUIDANCE ON COVID-19 TESTING AND SELF-ISOLATION

At this time, increased levels of COVID-19 are circulating and we are seeing many more cases due to the Omicron variant. For those who are fully vaccinated, most cases have been mild and resolve quickly. Thank you to everyone for continuing to keep each other and our patients, clients and residents safe by following [COVID-19 prevention practices](#).

WHEN TO GET TESTED

VCH continues to strongly advise that **anyone without symptoms** of COVID-19 **not** to visit VCH testing sites, as testing capacity is needed for those who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. This allows VCH sites to prioritize testing to those who are sick, and most in need of care. People without symptoms who require testing for travel purposes can find a [private pay testing site](#).

Please use the B.C. [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if you need to be tested for COVID-19. Testing for health care workers is only recommended if you have symptoms, even if you have been in contact with a case. Current recommendations for testing can be found on the [B.C. Centre for Disease Control website](#).

PEER TESTING FOR ACUTE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH-CARE STAFF

Health-care workers who work in a clinical setting who begin to develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while at their worksite are eligible for peer testing. This new program allows staff and medical staff to have a nasopharyngeal swab rapid antigen test administered by a colleague if they develop symptoms consistent with COVID-19 **while on shift**. These tests cannot be self-administered or taken at home.

- Staff and medical staff, who require testing services while at work, should inform their supervisor/manager that they have COVID-19-like symptoms and to consider peer testing options.
- Staff will receive a rapid antigen test which must be completed in situ.
- All tests administered will be documented to the individual being tested for appropriate internal follow-up.

Staff and medical staff who develop symptoms **outside of the worksite setting** can access testing at any [health-authority operated tested site](#) in the community, as required.

CLOSE CONTACTS

If you are a contact of someone who has COVID-19, including a household contact, **you can come to work as long as you don't develop symptoms**. You are not required to isolate, but should monitor for symptoms for 14 days. Please continue to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) as guided by Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC).

If you are self-monitoring, you and your household can continue with your normal daily activities. If you have children in school, it is recommended you continue to send them to class.

IF YOU HAVE TESTED NEGATIVE FOR COVID-19

Health-care workers who have tested **negative** for COVID-19 and have **mild symptoms** may continue to work if they feel well enough. They must wear PPE as outlined by Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) guidelines.

IF YOU HAVE TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

You will need to self-isolate for **five days** from when **symptoms** began or from your test date (whichever is earlier), and to follow the Public Health guidance found on our [website](#). If the exposure is work-related, you will be contacted by the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre (PWHCC) or Physician Occupational Safety and Health (POSH). Please contact the employee absence call line at **604-639-4297** for any work absences as a result of being sick.

CODING FOR MANAGERS

If a staff member is **instructed** to self-isolate at home due to COVID-19, they will be paid sick time if they have symptoms. If they are asymptomatic, they will be paid general paid leave.

If a staff member cannot work due to school or daycare closures, or is staying home to take care of an ill family member (e.g. sick child), they may request to work from home, if operationally feasible. Otherwise, staff may request vacation, unpaid COVID-19 leave, or banked overtime, depending on collective agreement provisions.

INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL

With the arrival to our region of Omicron, the new COVID-19 variant of concern, we've seen a notable increase in cases and much higher demand on testing services. We continue to assess safety measures and implement guidelines to ensure the safety of staff as well as patients, residents and clients across our organizations.

Guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), issued on Dec. 23 with consideration of Omicron, emphasizes the importance of continuing to adhere to, reinforce, evaluate and monitor the full range of existing COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures and guidance, which includes vaccination, screening, environmental cleaning, and engineering controls.

In line with the guidance, all staff, medical staff and contracted staff with direct contact with patients, clients and residents in acute care, critical care, long-term care and community care must wear a medical mask at all times, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating and/or drinking.

Additional PPE, such as N-95 respirators, is provided in certain clinical settings where aerosol-generating procedures may be performed on patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. Clinical staff in these settings can perform a point-of-care risk assessment (PCRA) to determine if an N-95 respirator is needed. The PCRA is based on professional judgment about the clinical situation, as well as up-to-date information on how the specific health-care facility has designed and implemented appropriate physical (engineering) and administrative controls, and the use and availability of PPE.

Occupational Health and PICNET have reviewed this guidance and confirmed that it is consistent with [current infection prevention and control guidance](#) in B.C.

Check out the [BCCDC COVID-19 patient screening tool](#) for direct care interactions and [routine PCRA tool](#) for guidance on conducting a PCRA.

Read all of the recommendations on the [Government of Canada COVID-19 website](#).

Please remember to follow Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) guidelines in addition to practicing excellent **hand hygiene** (check out IPAC's info sheets on [how to hand wash](#), [how to hand rub](#)), respecting personal space and staying home if sick.

KEY LINKS

- [BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Wellness Together Canada: Mental Health and Substance Use Support](#)
- [COVID-19 Multilingual Resources](#)
- [LifeWorks Employee and Family Assistance Program Services](#)
- [VCH Virtual Health website](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control \(IPAC\) website](#): Staff resources on how to assess, test and treat patients and protect patients and staff.
- [Infection Prevention and Control Policy](#): Ministry of Health
- [VCH Regional Pandemic Outbreak Response Plan](#): VCH Communicable Disease Control website
- [VCH Intranet](#): COVID-19 updates

REGIONAL EOC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- [COVID-19 VCH-PHC Regional EOC](#)