



# Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



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## Guidance for Outdoor Assemblies, Rallies, and Protests During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Ministry of  
Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

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



## Introduction

Assemblies, rallies, and protests are one way in which people can express their shared views and beliefs regarding important matters and are an important part of our democracy. Participating in assemblies, rallies, and protests may, however, lead to increased risk of COVID-19 transmission, if proper precautions are not taken. If preventative measures are taken, this risk can be reduced.

It is important to use your judgement and consider not only your own comfort level and health, but the health of others in your group, when deciding if you will participate in an assembly, rally, or protest. As with other social interactions, “bigger spaces, fewer faces” is a good way to approach assemblies, rallies, and protests.

Speaking, singing, and chanting lead to the release of respiratory droplets, which are the primary route of transmission for COVID-19. This is because the forceful exhalations associated with loud speaking, singing, and chanting can result in greater numbers of virus particles being released into the environment. As a result, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is increased when people participate in these kinds of activities as a group. This is especially true for large groups, in spaces that do not allow for adequate physical distancing or with poor ventilation, and when more than one person gathers around a microphone or shares other materials, allowing for transmission through surfaces that are contaminated and then handled.

## Before an Assembly, Rally, or Protest

- Assess the risks associated with participation and consider whether this assembly, rally, or protest can be delayed to a future date after the pandemic
- Anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or who has symptoms of COVID-19 should not participate in in-person assemblies, rallies, or protests
- Anyone who is more likely to experience [severe illness from COVID-19](#) – including older adults – should avoid participating in assemblies, rallies, or protests with others in-person, especially in larger groups as increased gathering size is associated with a greater risk of transmission
- Sites and routes should be selected to allow participants to maintain at least 2 metre of physical distance at all times, including on arrival and departure
- All groups or individuals considering participation in assemblies, rallies, or protests should consult information regarding public health orders and gathering size limitations currently in effect at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>
- Organizers should gather the regular/emergency contact information for everyone attending an assembly, rally, or protest in order to support contact tracing efforts, should that be necessary
- Organizers are encouraged to choose locations which do not interfere with COVID-19 Safety Plans such as allowing a safe distance for entry/exit of buildings or businesses



### During an Assembly, Rally, or Protest

- If an assembly, rally, or protest is to occur, do so in a manner that will not result in physical interaction with others participating or not participating
- If groups wish to congregate or march on foot, participants are advised to:
  - Keep a distance of at least two metres between all people at all times
  - Avoid prolonged exposure to anyone outside the participants' household
  - Wear a [mask](#) and maintain proper [hand hygiene](#) practices
  - Not share items or pass them back and forth, including phones, water bottles, food, masks, or other personal items
  - Not share or handle signs, placards, or other materials handled by other participants
  - Use signs or banners instead of singing or chanting to deliver information
- If there is singing or chanting, stay as far away from other participants as possible, since this activity expels the virus at a greater velocity and distance than regular speech

### After an Assembly, Rally, or Protest

Participants are advised to:

- Avoid crowded public transport
- Wash or sanitize hands following the gather and when they return home
- Monitor themselves for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19
- Use the BC [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if they need to be tested for COVID-19

