



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



HOW YOU CAN SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Take care of others by taking care of yourself.

Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are sick.

Stay at Home and Physically Distance

Stay at home whenever you can. Maintain 2 meters distance from those outside of your household.

COVID-19 Guidance to Faith-Based Organizations

March 31, 2020

The unfamiliar nature of COVID-19 contributes to uncertainty and concern in society, particularly when misinformation competes with facts. As pillars of strength in communities, faith-based services have an important role in connecting the community, contributing to beneficial and safe social interactions as well as our outbreak response, like the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This document provides faith-based organizations with guidance – based on what we know about COVID-19 to date – on how to plan and prepare, prevent infection, and protect members that access and work for these organizations.

What we know about coronaviruses and COVID-19

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases that range from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The viruses are spread through large liquid droplets when a person infected with a coronavirus coughs or sneezes; the virus in these droplets can enter through the eyes, nose, or throat of another person if they are in close contact with the person who coughed or sneezed. The virus does not transmit through particles in the air and is not something that can come in through the skin.

The new coronavirus that is circulating around the globe causes a disease called COVID-19. While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases. The symptoms of COVID-19, are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and common cold. They include cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing. Until more is understood about the virus, older people and people with a weakened immune system or underlying medical condition are considered at higher risk of severe disease.

Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days and until symptoms resolve. A Self-Assessment Tool has also been developed to assess your symptoms: <https://covid19.thrive.health/>.

At this time, to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in our communities, the Provincial Health Officer has ordered that [no public gatherings or events of more than 50 people take place](#). If you are planning a smaller event, it is important to ensure that physical distancing is possible – so people are able to maintain at least two metres (or 6 feet) between them at all times.



Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

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

Non-medical inquiries (ex. travel, physical distancing): 1-888-COVID19 (1888-268-4319) or text 604-630-0300



As there are now confirmed COVID-19 cases in all regions of B.C., it is important for faith-based organization to support clergy, workers, congregation members, families and visitors in staying safe and healthy.

To help prevent COVID-19 virus transmission

There are plenty of practices that your organization can take to ensure that you are doing your part in preventing the spread of infection. As there are now confirmed COVID-19 cases in all regions of B.C., the following are activities you should undertake:

- Wherever possible, use online tools to connect with others virtually for services, meetings and events. Consider cancelling all non-essential in-person services, meetings and events.
- If you do still hold services, meetings, or events, ensure that people gather in small groups of 5 to 10, and that social distancing (2 metres / 6 feet) between members can be maintained.
- Remind congregants and members to stay at home if any of their direct family members (or people they have regular contact with) are unwell.
- The most important thing you can do to prevent COVID-19 is to wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face. Visit the BC Centre for Disease Control's website for a hand hygiene poster that you can print and post in your space: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/signage-posters>
- Ensure the washrooms are always well stocked with liquid soap and paper towels and that warm running water is available. Antibacterial soap is not required to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow when coughing or sneezing and avoid others who are unwell. Cough into your elbow or use a tissue to avoid coughing or sneezing into either your hands or into the air. Dispose of used tissues right away into an appropriate receptacle and immediately wash your hands.
- Provide COVID-19 prevention supplies during services or events, such as plain soap, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, tissues, and waste baskets.
- Minimize religious or cultural practices that involve person-to-person contact such as hands and faces, shared cups or vessels. If there are practices which must take place, ensure all sanitary and safety measures are taken, including hand washing or using hand sanitizer after each contact/ every person, but minimize all unnecessary contact whenever possible.
- When collections are taken, all those who handle cash or coins must wash their hands frequently with soap and water. There is currently no evidence that COVID-19 can be passed on to others by touching or handling cash.
- Instruct congregants not to share food, utensils, glasses and dishes. COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets released when you cough or sneeze and is left on shared items and eating implements, such as forks and glasses.
- Avoid communal or buffet style meals but identify an alternative, such as pre-packaged meals.
- Encourage everyone to wash their hands with plain soap and water OR an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with a minimum of 60% alcohol content), before and after services, meetings, or events.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as doorknobs, countertops, bathrooms and other surfaces at least once a day. Regular household cleaning products are effective at eliminating COVID-19. Follow the directions on the product label.



- Encourage members to greet each other with a smile and wave, as opposed to any direct person-to-person contact.
- For any religious or cultural burial or funeral practices, please take the time to review the updated BC CDC provincial guidance for handling deceased persons: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/deceased-persons>

What about Face Masks?

If you are sick, you should wear a face mask around other people and before you enter a health care provider office or hospital. If you are not able to wear a face mask, you should try your best to cover coughs and sneezes.

If you are not sick, you do not need to wear a face mask unless you are caring for someone who is sick, and that person cannot wear a face mask. Face masks may be in short supply during an outbreak and should be saved for caregivers.

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