

# A GUIDE TO COVID-19

CARING FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

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## INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to provide useful information for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. The guide focuses on how you can care for yourself and others during the worldwide spread of a new disease, as is happening now with COVID-19.



## COVID: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and the common cold. Symptoms include coughing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing.

COVID-19 is spread by liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. The contaminated droplets can enter the body through the eyes, nose or throat if you are in close contact. The droplets quickly fall to the ground or land on surfaces that an infected person touches. The droplets do not linger in the air.

Elders, people with chronic health or respiratory conditions, people with compromised immune systems due to disease or treatment, and pregnant women have a higher risk of getting serious complications if they become sick.

Because COVID-19 is a new virus to the human population, there are currently no vaccines developed to prevent infection. Research and development of a COVID-19 vaccine are underway. It generally takes 12 to 18 months to develop a vaccine for a new disease and to produce enough vaccine for large populations.



## PREVENTION AND PROTECTION

### How to Avoid and Limit the Spread of Infection

#### HANDWASHING

The most important thing you can do to prevent infection is to wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If a sink is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean your hands. It's safe to wash your hands with soap and water if you are living in a community with a Boil Water Advisory (BWA) or a Do Not Consume (DNC) advisory. However, if you are living with a Do Not Use (DNU) advisory you should wash your hands with bottled water. Although COVID-19 does not appear to be spread by eating food contaminated with the virus, be sure to wash your hands before preparing or eating food.

#### COUGH ETIQUETTE

If you need to cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue to limit the spread of infection. Throw the tissue away immediately.

#### PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Physical distancing means protecting your personal space by staying at least two metres (six feet) away from other people. Physical distancing is essential to preventing the spread of COVID-19. During the pandemic, we need to avoid using the usual greetings, such as handshakes, hugs, and kisses. Safe greetings include a wave, a nod, or a bow.



## **SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND TRAVEL**

Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, we strongly recommend against attending any social gatherings and travelling if it is not essential. Attending even small gatherings increases the risk of exposure to COVID-19, which increases the chance of infection and spread to your community or neighbourhood.

## **FACEMASKS**

Wearing a facemask if you are sick will help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 to other people. A mask will help keep a person's droplets in. Facemasks can also provide some protection to others around you when physical distancing is difficult to maintain i.e., in grocery stores or on public transit.

## **CLEANING**

The COVID-19 virus can survive on porous surfaces such as skin and cloth as well as other materials and surfaces for hours to days, depending on the surface. Regular household cleaners are effective at removing germs. You may also use a solution of one part bleach mixed with nine parts water to disinfect areas that are touched often such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, light switches, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets and bedside tables.



## SYMPTOMS AND TESTING

You can use this easy self-assessment tool from the BC provincial government <https://bc.thrive.health/> to help determine whether you or a loved one need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. Testing is available for everyone who needs it. If symptoms appear, self-isolate and call your health care provider or **8-1-1** for guidance.

COVID-19 is tested using a “standard swab” i.e., a long Q-tip that scrapes cells from the very back of the nose or throat. These swabs are sent to a laboratory for testing. Click on the links below for a list of collection centres (i.e., testing site locations) in BC to find one near you. You can also call **8-1-1**, your family doctor or your community health nurse to find the nearest collection centre.

- [Collection centre finder](#) (for mobile and desktop)
- [Collection centre finder](#) (for Internet Explorer)

If you need to be tested for COVID-19 and you cannot get to the testing location on your own, please call the BC Ambulance non-emergency line at **604-872-5151** for help travelling to the testing location.





# MANAGING ILLNESS AND SELF-ISOLATION

## SELF-ISOLATION AT HOME

Self-isolation means staying at home, not going to work or school, and minimizing how often you leave home.

- If you have no symptoms but may have been exposed to the virus, you need to self-isolate for 14 days from the date of possible exposure
- If you are experiencing symptoms, you need to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the date of the onset of symptoms. If you are still having symptoms at 10 days, continue self-isolation until you are symptom-free. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-isolate beyond 10 days

If you are infected and live with other people, you can still self-isolate at home. Stay and sleep in a room with good airflow that is away from others. Use a separate bathroom if you can. If you are in the same room with anyone, avoid face-to-face contact and wear a facemask. Friends and family can drop off food outside your room or home.

Note that if one person in the household is infected, the whole household must self-isolate even if the other household members do not have symptoms. If you live with an Elder or someone with a chronic health condition, that person would be better protected if they stayed in the home of other family members or friends nearby.

Health Benefits related to transportation and accommodation are available to support self-isolation. Details are in the FNHA Health Benefits Available section on page 10.



## HOUSEKEEPING AND CLEANING

Keep the personal items such as toothbrush, cups, and cell phones of those who are sick separate from everyone else's. Put all used paper towels, masks and tissues into trash bins lined with a plastic bag and empty the garbage frequently. Be sure to wash your hands afterwards. Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with those who are sick. Place laundry in a laundry basket with a plastic liner. Wash your laundry with regular laundry detergent and hot water and dry it on a high temperature setting until it's completely dry. If you are doing your laundry at a laundromat, wipe down the controls and handles on the washer/dryer before and after using it.

Clean hard surfaces such as taps, counters, doorknobs, light switches, telephones and railings with a disinfectant or bleach solution multiple times per day. Note that cleaning physically removes, rather than kills, viruses and bacteria i.e., with water, detergents, and steady friction from a washcloth or rag. Disinfection kills viruses and bacteria. Use disinfectant solution only on objects, never on the human body.

### Items to have on Hand

- Non-perishable food items, such as canned or frozen soups, juices, fruits and vegetables, canned fish, crackers, and peanut butter
- Household cleaning supplies, such as bleach or disinfectant, dishwashing soap and paper towels
- Personal hygiene products such as soap, hand sanitizer, shampoo and toilet paper
- A fever thermometer and over-the-counter fever medications, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Prescription medications with a 2-3 month supply, if possible





## FOOD AND SHOPPING

Eating a variety of foods including traditional foods, fruits, vegetables, proteins and whole grains helps support your immune system and your mental and emotional wellness. Even though COVID-19 is not spread by eating food contaminated with the virus, be sure to wash your hands before preparing and eating food.

### Grocery shopping tips:

- Choose a “designated shopper” i.e., one person in your household who is safely able to do the grocery shopping
- Make a meal plan and a shopping list
- Plan to buy enough food to last 1-2 weeks for your household
- Choose fruits and vegetables that last longer in the refrigerator or are frozen easily
- Freezing milk works well and is safe, allowing you to buy larger quantities without worrying about the milk spoiling
- While at the store, avoid touching items you probably won't buy



## LOOKING AFTER LOVED ONES

- Providing supportive care to loved ones who are sick at home includes rest, drinking plenty of fluids, and using a pain reliever for fever and body aches
- If you are providing direct care to someone who is sick, avoid visiting other people
- If possible, have only one person care for those who are sick to limit the number of people exposed
- If you can, find a person who can be your “buddy” so that if you get sick, your buddy can go to the pharmacy or store for you – and you can be someone else’s buddy too
- You can use technology such as phone and video calls to keep in touch with friends, family members and others in your community or neighbourhood
- You can offer to get groceries and run errands for people who are sick or are at higher risk of getting serious complications if they become sick
- Keep emergency phone numbers in a place where everyone in the household can find them

## MEDICATION

Anti-fever medications such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help ease the symptoms of COVID-19. If you need medication, use a pharmacy delivery service or ask a friend or family member to pick up your medication and bring it to your home. Call your pharmacy ahead of time to ask about options. Temporary coverage for over-the-counter drugs for pain and fever are available through Health Benefits, as is mileage for medication pickup. Details are in the FNHA Health Benefits Available section on page 11.

## WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE

If your symptoms are severe, such as shortness of breath, chest pain or if a fever continues more than three days despite taking anti-fever medication, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest Emergency Department. Call ahead before you get medical care. By calling ahead, you help the clinic, hospital, lab or doctor’s office prepare for your visit and stop the spread of germs.



## MEDICAL SUPPORT

### FIRST NATIONS VIRTUAL DOCTOR OF THE DAY

You may not have easy access to a primary care health provider due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program enables BC First Nations individuals to make virtual appointments with a doctor. The program supports First Nations people and their family members who live on-reserve or away-from-home (off-reserve) and who have limited or no access to their family doctor. The First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program includes doctors of Indigenous ancestry and all doctors follow the principles and practices of cultural safety and humility.

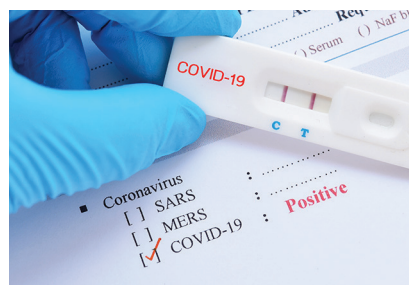
If you do not have a doctor of your own or if you have lost access to your doctor due to the COVID-19 pandemic, call 1-855-344-3800 to book an appointment. Medical office assistants are available to help you seven days per week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

### FNHA HEALTH BENEFITS AVAILABLE

#### Medical Transportation Benefits to Support Self-isolation

If you need to self-isolate or have tested positive for COVID-19, Medical Transportation benefits may be available to assist you. You may be eligible for isolation support if you are unable to obtain your own accommodations and if you:

- Are returning to Canada from international travel including the United States;
- Are confirmed as having COVID-19 or have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19;
- Are returning to community from a high-risk location or environment including work camps, care facilities, or communities experiencing an outbreak;
- Belong to vulnerable population groups (identified on next page) that would have difficulties self-isolating due to issues with transportation, food delivery, medical requirements, or where COVID-19 is present in the community;
- Have symptoms of COVID-19 but no confirmed testing; or
- Have a positive COVID-19 test and live more than 2 hours from a hospital.





### Vulnerable population groups include:

- Elders (60+);
- People with pre-existing chronic conditions (such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, asthma, renal disease, heart disease);
- People with compromised immune systems due to disease or treatment (i.e., treatment of cancer or organ transplantation, with the associated increased range of chronic illnesses and inflammatory conditions);
- Children under 5 years of age and infants; and
- Pregnant women

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and were told to recover at home, your household members may be eligible to access Medical Transportation benefits to stay elsewhere.

The FNHA Health Benefits Isolation Support team can help you with accommodation, travel and meals if you need to self-isolate. To find out if you are eligible or if you have any self-isolation transportation questions, please call **1-888-305-1505** between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days per week.

### Temporary Mileage Coverage for Medication Pickup

The FNHA is supporting communities to coordinate medication delivery and pickup for all community members. If your community is not coordinating medication delivery and pickup or if your pharmacy is unable to deliver medications, you may be eligible for temporary mileage coverage to pick up your medication. Contact your patient travel clerk or call Health Benefits at **1-855-550-5454** to see if you are eligible for mileage coverage.

### Over-the-Counter Drugs for Pain and Fever are Temporarily Available

To encourage physical distancing and reduce the number of doctor's visits, pharmacists can now temporarily dispense pain and fever over-the-counter medications without a prescription. Acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen and acetylsalicylic acid products are now temporarily included on Plan W's pharmacist-initiated treatment list.



## Aboriginal Patient Navigators

Aboriginal Patient Navigators (APNs) connect with Aboriginal patients and family members, health care professionals, and other service providers in your region to ensure Aboriginal patients receive culturally safe, appropriate and timely care, whether in hospital or in community. Note that APNs are also referred to as Aboriginal Patient Liaisons or Aboriginal Liaison Nurses, depending on the region in which you live.

### FRASER SALISH REGION:

- If you live in Surrey, Delta, White Rock, Langley and Tsawwassen, call the Aboriginal Mental Health Liaison at **604-953-4900** ext. 763041
- If you live in Mission, call the Aboriginal Mental Health Case Manager at **604-814-5642**
- More information: <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/Service-Directory/Services/mental-health-and-substance-use/mental-health---community-services/aboriginal-mental-health-liaisons>

### INTERIOR REGION:

- This webpage provides a detailed list of APNs and contact information based on where you live in the Interior: [https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourHealth/AboriginalHealth/Partnerships/Documents/APN\\_Contact.pdf](https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourHealth/AboriginalHealth/Partnerships/Documents/APN_Contact.pdf)
- Main telephone number: **250-469-7070**

### NORTHERN REGION:

- This webpage provides a detailed list of Aboriginal Patient Liaisons and contact information based on where you live in the North: <https://www.indigenoushealthnh.ca/initiatives/APLs>
- Main telephone number: **250-649-7226**

### VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION:

- This webpage provides a detailed list of Aboriginal Liaison Nurses and contact information based on where you live on Vancouver Island: <https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/aboriginal-health-services/aboriginal-liaison-nurses>
- Main telephone number: **1-877-370-8699** (toll-free)

### VANCOUVER COASTAL REGION:

- Call **1-877-875-1131** (toll-free)
- More information: [http://www.vch.ca/Locations-Services/result?res\\_id=771](http://www.vch.ca/Locations-Services/result?res_id=771)

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORTS

Feeling worried during a crisis is quite normal. You may have feelings of distress due to the uncertainty we are experiencing. You might even find that the COVID-19 pandemic triggers symptoms of trauma. Living through a pandemic can affect mental health and wellness. By being aware of these negative impacts on our wellness, we are better able to cope with them.

By staying connected to each other, supporting each other, and helping each other to maintain and build our resilience, we will get through this pandemic. Please reach out and connect with family members, friends, and health providers when you need to. Try and check in with your family members regularly to see how they are doing.

**Here are some mental wellness and cultural supports available to you:**

- Mental Health and Cultural Supports  
<https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-COVID-19-Mental-Health-and-Cultural-Supports.pdf>  
(resource list)
- Staying Connected during the Pandemic  
<https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-Staying-Connected-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>  
(fact sheet)
- Impacts of the Pandemic on Mental Health and Wellness  
<https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/impacts-of-the-pandemic-on-mental-health-and-wellness>  
(article)
- Coping with COVID-19  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDD6kKTEDp0>  
(video)
- The Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health and Wellness  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swGXDmJOMIM>  
(video)
- Coping with Domestic Violence  
<https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/when-staying-home-is-not-safe>  
(article)

All documents and links above are located on the FNHA.CA coronavirus webpage for BC First Nations Individuals (<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/coronavirus/public>)



## RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- [First Nations Health Authority](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources available for all BC First Nations Individuals \(status and non-status\)](#)
- [Food Security for BC First Nations Communities](#)
- [COVID-19 Updates from Indigenous Services Canada](#)
- [Quick Guide for Individuals: COVID-19 Response Plan](#)

### ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR SELF-ISOLATION SUPPORT?

To find out about self-isolation supports that you may be eligible for, call **1-888-305-1505** between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days per week and the FNHA Health Benefits Isolation Support team can help you.

### ASK YOUR LOCAL FNHA COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVE

Community relations representatives have a deep knowledge of FNHA's Health Benefits program. If you have any questions related to Health Benefits, call the community relations representative in your region:

- **Fraser Salish region:** James Delorme  
Tel: 778-684-1886 or Email: [james.delorme@fnha.ca](mailto:james.delorme@fnha.ca)
- **Interior region:** Joyce Kenoras  
Tel: 250-318-6634 or Email: [joyce.kenoras@fnha.ca](mailto:joyce.kenoras@fnha.ca)
- **Northern region:** Lindsey Larsen  
Tel: 250-960-9201 or Email: [lindsey.larsen@fnha.ca](mailto:lindsey.larsen@fnha.ca)
- **Vancouver Coastal region:** Jenny Smith  
Tel: 604-785-6955 or Email: [jennifer.smith@fnha.ca](mailto:jennifer.smith@fnha.ca)
- **Vancouver Island region:** Candy-Lea Chickite  
Tel: 250-830-7346 or Email: [lea.chickite@fnha.ca](mailto:lea.chickite@fnha.ca)