

COVID-19: Adult & Pediatric Viral Testing Guidelines for British Columbia

Guidelines for COVID-19 testing in BC are periodically reviewed and updated based on COVID-19 epidemiology, new clinical information, public health measures in place, testing & contact tracing capacity, and our evolving understanding of test performance in clinical settings. As a result, BC guidelines may differ from other national or provincial guidelines.

The majority of COVID-19 cases in BC are currently related to local acquisition from a known case or cluster.

Based on currently available data from BC and from other jurisdictions, the presence of more than one potential COVID-19 symptom is more predictive of a positive COVID-19 test than the presence of a single symptom.

Parents and caregivers assessing their child for key symptoms of illness before sending them to school should refer to the Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools.

Guidance for COVID-19 Testing by Nucleic Acid Tests:

Testing guidance is not meant to replace clinician assessment, and providers should continue using their clinical judgement in determining whether a COVID-19 test is required. COVID-like symptoms can be indicative of other infections (e.g. meningitis, invasive group A streptococcus disease, etc), further highlighting the importance of clinical judgement.

1. The general guidance for people with no known COVID-19 close contacts and who have new or worsening symptoms are:

Recommend testing if **any ONE** of the following symptoms more predictive or strongly associated with COVID-19 are reported.

- Fever or chills
- Cough*
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Difficulty breathing

*Either new onset or worsening/exacerbation of chronic cough.

Recommend testing if **any TWO or more** of the following general symptoms **persist after 24 hours**, and are not related to any other pre-existing conditions.

- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

For those who have had close contact with a COVID-19 case, and have even a single symptom included above, testing is recommended.

You can reach a Medical Health Officer at 604.675.3900 toll free at 1.855.675.3900
For public health emergencies after hours contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893

Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officers

Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Patricia Daly

Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Mark Lysyshyn

Vancouver: Dr. Althea Hayden, Dr. Alex Choi, Dr. Michael Schwandt 604.675.3900

Richmond: Dr. Meena Dawar 604.233.3170 | North Shore and Coastal Rural: Dr. John Harding 604.983.6701

Less common symptoms of COVID-19 infection include nasal symptoms (runny nose, sneezing, congestion and sinus involvement), conjunctivitis (pink eye), dizziness, confusion, abdominal pain, and skin rashes or discoloration of fingers or toes. Clinical judgement remains important in the differential diagnosis and work-up of individuals presenting with these symptoms (e.g., people with allergies). For more information on the diagnosis and management of COVID-19 infection, please refer to the [clinical guidelines](#) on the BCCDC website.

Children who are suspected of having [multisystem inflammatory syndrome \(MIS-C\)](#) should also be tested. Infants less than 3 months of age who are febrile, or who have suspect COVID-19 should be assessed by a health care provider. For more information on the diagnosis and management of COVID-19 infection in children, including MIS-C, please refer to the pediatric [clinical guidance](#) on the BCCDC website.

2. Consider a lower testing threshold for symptomatic individuals who:

- Are residents or staff of long-term care facilities
- Require admission to hospital or are likely to be admitted
- Are healthcare workers
- Are travellers who in the past 14 days returned to BC from outside Canada, or from an area with higher infection rates within Canada
- Are residents of remote, isolated, or Indigenous communities
- Live in congregate settings such as work-camps, correctionalfacilities, shelters, group homes, assisted living and seniors' residences
- Are homeless or have unstable housing
- Are essential service providers, such as first responders
- Have a chronic medical condition, are at risk for severe illness, or are immunocompromised due to medication or treatment
- Live with someone at risk of severe disease from COVID-19 infection (e.g., elderly, chronic conditions)

3. COVID-19 testing is not routinely recommended for asymptomatic individuals.

Routine COVID-19 screening of asymptomatic people is not recommended in BC (e.g., in schools, daycares, prior to surgery or other procedures, in hospitals or healthcare settings, as a condition of employment or for travel).

4. Medical Health Officers may recommend testing as part of public health investigations.

Medical Health Officers may recommend testing for individuals who are part of a public health investigation of a case, cluster or an outbreak, regardless of symptom profile.

Note: In May, the Provincial Health Officer [temporarily removed](#) the requirement for licensed practical nurses to have a client-specific order prior to performing nasopharyngeal swabs if being done as part of a screening program approved by a Medical Health Officer.

For more information, please refer to the BCCDC guidelines:

http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/BCCDC_PHL_Updated_nCoV_Lab_Guidance.pdf

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