



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
POLICY COMMUNIQUÉ

COMMUNIQUÉ

TO: Healthy Authority CEOs

TRANSMITTAL DATE: March 20, 2020

COMMUNIQUÉ NUMBER: 2020-01

CLIFF NUMBER: 1157713

SUBJECT: Infection Prevention and Control for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

DETAILS: This document replaces the February 11, 2020 version of Communique 2020-01, as well as Communique 2020-02 (Fit Testing for N95 Respirators). Both former policies are rescinded and replaced by this amalgamated and updated policy.

This document outlines Ministry of Health requirements for preventing and controlling novel coronavirus in health authorities.

Key additions include:

- Family and visitor policy for all health care facilities;
- Additional measures to mitigate the demand for N95 respirators and other critical PPE.

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 20, 2020

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Infection Prevention and Control for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

POLICY OBJECTIVE

- This policy protects patients, clinicians, health care workers and the public by outlining provincial expectations for the implementation of infection prevention and control practices to prevent and control novel coronavirus in all health authority facilities, programs and services.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Shall:** A mandatory requirement based on Ministry of Health directive.
- **Should:** A recommended best practice for implementation at the discretion of health authorities.

POLICY:

INFECTION PREVENTION & CONTROL GUIDANCE

- Effective immediately, health authorities shall implement infection prevention and control guidance for novel coronavirus in **acute care settings**, as published by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC).

PHAC's guidance materials for novel coronavirus in acute care settings are available at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-acute-healthcare-settings.html>.

- Effective immediately, health authorities shall implement infection prevention and control guidance for novel coronavirus in **Long Term Care settings**, as published by the BC Centre for Disease Control.

BC's guidance materials for novel coronavirus in Long Term Care settings are available at:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/clinical-care/long-term-care-facilities-assisted-living>

- Effective immediately, health authorities shall implement all supplemental infection prevention and control guidance and resource materials for novel coronavirus endorsed by the BC Ministry of Health.

All supplemental infection prevention and control guidance and resource materials within the scope of this policy are available online at:

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care>

Please refer to Appendix A for a current list of all COVID-19 infection prevention and control guidance and resource materials within the scope of this policy.

Family and Visitor Policy

- Effective immediately, health authorities shall restrict visitors to essential visits only.
- Essential visits include, but are not limited to:
 - Visits for compassionate care (e.g., end of life and critical illness);
 - Visits considered paramount to patient/client care and well being, such as assistance with feeding or mobility; and
 - Existing registered volunteers providing services as described above only.

Surgical/Procedural Masks

- Surgical/procedure masks are effective at capturing droplets, the main transmission route of COVID-19. For this reason, surgical/procedural masks provide adequate protection for health care workers caring for COVID-19 patients.
- Surgical/Procedural masks must be used in combination with eye protection, frequent hand-cleaning with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub, gloves and a gown.
- An N95 respirator is only required when performing aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMPs) on a person under investigation for or diagnosed with COVID-19.

Fit Testing for N95 Respirators:

- Health authorities facing an imminent shortage of N95 respirators shall allow workers who have had their respirator fit test within the previous 2 years continue to use respirators without additional testing.
- Health authorities facing an imminent shortage of N95 respirators shall ensure these same workers perform a fit check or seal check prior to the use of the respirator, and where that check reveals an issue with the seal, a full fit test will be performed.
- Health authorities not facing an imminent shortage of N95 respirators shall perform annual fit tests as required by section 8.40(2.1) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

Additional Measures to Mitigate the Demand for N95 Respirators:

- Effective immediately, health authorities shall implement the following additional strategies to mitigate the demand for N95 respirators:
 - Health authorities shall work collaboratively to actively manage inventories of respirators to ensure high risk areas have adequate and appropriate supplies.
 - Health authorities shall expand N95 oversight activities to include a formal approval process for N95 respirator distribution, as informed by an organizational review of current usage levels for those items across work units.
 - Health authorities shall implement appropriate, alternative respirators in high use departments. This includes adopting alternative N95s, reusable respirators and Powered Air-Purifying Respirators (PAPRs).
 - Health authorities shall not issue N95 respirators to health care workers unless those individuals are directly involved in patient care or related work that requires an N95.
- **Note:** Current PHAC guidance for COVID-19 does not require use of an N95 respirator, unless an aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP) is being performed.

- Health authorities shall reduce face-to-face health care worker encounters with patients where an N95 respirator is required. This includes, but is not limited to, bundling activities and using video monitoring.
- To reduce overall demand for new respirator Fit Testing, health authorities shall assign health care workers with a current/valid Fit Tested N95 respirator to care for patients where an N95 is required.
- Health authorities shall cohort health care workers by identifying and assigning designated teams of health care workers to provide care for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Health authorities shall permit limited, extended use of N95s whereby a single N95 respirator can be worn for repeated, close contact encounters with multiple patients, without removing the respirator.
- Health authorities shall permit limited, extended use of N95 respirators beyond the manufacturer's stated expiry date.
- Health authorities shall immediately cease all non-essential education and training activities requiring respirators.
- Health authorities shall strictly limit the number of clinicians and staff allowed into a room for procedures required for care.
- Health authorities shall implement controlled access of non-essential individuals to all facilities.

Additional Measures to Mitigate the Demand for PPE:

- Effective immediately, health authorities shall implement the following additional strategies to mitigate the demand for PPE:
 - Health authorities shall work collaboratively to actively manage inventories of PPE to ensure high risk areas have adequate and appropriate supplies;
 - Health authorities shall expand PPE oversight activities to include a formal, centralized approval process for PPE distribution, as informed by an organizational review of current usage levels for those items across work units.
 - Health authorities shall designate a central, managed location within each facility from which PPE supplies will be stored for distribution to approved departments.
 - Health authorities shall implement a process to require justification for the amount of PPE inventory needed, for each request.
 - Health authorities shall implement a process for identifying high risk units and delivering PPE to those units on a priority basis.
 - Health authorities shall not order excessive amounts of personal protective equipment from the Provincial Health Services Authority Supply Chain as a response to COVID-19.

Appendix A

COVID-19 Guidance and Resource Materials for Implementation

These tables will be updated and expanded as new infection prevention and control materials and resources are approved for implementation in BC.

COVID-19 INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL GUIDANCE

Setting	Document Title	Current Document Version
Acute Care	Infection Prevention and Control for Coronavirus Disease (2019-nCoV): Interim Guidance for Acute Healthcare Settings	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-acute-healthcare-settings.html
Long Term Care	Infection Prevention and Control for Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): Interim guidance for Long-Term Care and Assisted Living Facilities	http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_LongTermCareAssistedLiving.pdf
All Settings	Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/nosocomial-occupational-infections/routine-practices-additional-precautions-preventing-transmission-infection-healthcare-settings.html
All Settings	Respiratory Protection for Health Care Workers Caring for Potential or Confirmed COVID-19 Patients* *Includes Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures (AGMP) list for COVID-19.	http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/Respiratory-protection-COVID19.pdf
Primary Care	COVID-19 Patient Identification and Assessment for Primary Care with Medical Doctor/Nurse Practitioner	http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID-19_MOH_BCCDC_Flowchart.pdf
Primary Care	Cleaning and Disinfecting Physician Offices	http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID-19_MOH_BCCDC_EnvironmentalCleaning.pdf

Resource Materials

Document Title	Current Document Version
COVID-19 Signage for Entrance of Health Care Settings English & Translated Versions	http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/signage-posters
Hand Hygiene Poster	http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_Handwashing%20Poster_MD%20offices.pdf
Donning and Doffing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Posters	Donning: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_MOH_BCCDC_Donning.pdf
	Doffing: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_MOH_BCCDC_Doffing.pdf
Cleaning and Disinfecting Clinical Spaces/ Environmental Cleaning and Disinfectants for Physicians' Offices	http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID-19_MOH_BCCDC_EnvironmentalCleaning.pdf