

March 6, 2020 – 5:12 p.m.



All-staff bulletin

PHSA's weekly novel coronavirus (COVID-19) update

Sent on behalf of Dr. Réka Gustafson, Vice President of Public Health & Wellness and Deputy Provincial Health Officer

This week, 13 new diagnoses of COVID-19 were confirmed in British Columbia, bringing the provincial total to 21 cases. The majority of new cases are related to travel to an area of known COVID-19 transmission. The source of one case has not been identified to date.

Premier John Horgan [announced today](#) that the B.C. Government has created a B.C. Pandemic Provincial Coordination Plan to respond to the evolving outbreak and to guide a government-wide response to COVID-19 infections in BC. More information is available on the [Pandemic Planning](#) website. The Premier and Health Minister said the provincial response will focus on:

1. Protecting the population
2. Protecting vulnerable citizens
3. Protecting health workers
4. Supporting health-care capacity

Earlier this week, the federal government announced it had created a [cabinet committee for COVID-19](#), focused on the health and economic impacts of the virus.

Globally, the number of new cases in China has declined substantially, while Iran has been identified as an affected area. Returning travelers from Iran are now asked to self-isolate for 14 days upon return to Canada.

The Premier noted in his briefing today that health care workers are 'extraordinary heroes' in these situations, and extends his thanks for your work to protect the public and prepare for a possible spread in the community.

We have working groups and emergency operations committees in place across PHSA, with many people involved in managing current cases and planning for the next few weeks and months. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to our patients and our colleagues.

The situation in B.C.:

As of today, we have a total of 21 cases of COVID-19 identified in British Columbia. We have tested 2008 people and processed 2803 samples in B.C.

- Of the 21 confirmed cases:
 - 13 new cases have been announced since our last all-staff update,
 - Most individuals are in isolation at home with support and monitoring from public health teams; one remains in hospital,
 - One person remains in hospital.
- People arriving in Canada from Hubei Province, China and from Iran are being asked to stay home and self-isolate for 14 days and monitor closely for symptoms of illness. If any symptoms arise, these individuals should connect with their primary care provider, local public health office or call 8-1-1.

The situation in Canada:

Canada has active [COVID-19 travel advisories](#) for:

- [China](#)
- [Hong Kong](#)
- [Iran](#)
- [Japan](#)
- [Italy](#)
- [Singapore](#)
- [South Korea](#)

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) continues to assess the public health risk associated with COVID-19 as low for Canada. Public health risk is continually reassessed as new information becomes available.

Please continue to check the national guidance frequently, as criteria for screening, testing and public health management will continue to be updated.

Hot topics for staff:

Planning your March break travel:

The Public Health Agency of Canada provides up-to-date travel advisories for Canadians. Please [check this link](#) as you make March break travel plans for you and your family.

Hygiene and prevention

The best protection for staff and visitors to PHSA facilities is to follow proper hygiene and respiratory etiquette. This includes frequent hand-hygiene, using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer, covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and staying home when you are sick. Employees with symptoms should not be at work, and should recuperate at home on sick leave.

Patients/clients wearing masks.

Masks are recommended for patients/clients who have respiratory symptoms to protect other patients.

Staff who have travelled to affected areas

As noted earlier, for individuals who have recently travelled to Hubei, China or to Iran are asked to self-isolate for 14 days.

- Individuals who have recently travelled elsewhere are asked to:
 - monitor their health for fever, cough and difficulty breathing for 14 days and
 - self-isolate promptly if they develop these symptoms. Call 8-1-1 or their health care provider and provide a travel history.

Your sources of information:

- While our understanding and our response to the COVID-19 outbreaks evolve, we will be sending weekly updates to PHSA staff. Please find the previous Friday all-staff bulletins with updates on COVID-19 in the [coronavirus resources section](#) on POD.
- The BCCDC website has a publicly accessible, [dedicated area](#) for health professionals as well as [comprehensive information for the public](#)
- PHSA has a [dedicated area on POD](#). BCEHS alerts and updates are on the [BCAS intranet](#) and in the [BCEHS Handbook](#). [Note: you must be on the respective PHSA and BCEHS networks to access these links].
- For site-specific questions, please check in with your manager or clinical leadership.
- For trusted information from around the world, please check the [World Health Organization](#) website.

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