



Critical COVID-19 News

Information for employees, medical staff, paramedics and contractors

March 18 at 4:10 p.m.

Sent on behalf of Dr. Maureen O'Donnell & Susan Wannamaker

Chief medical officer and chief operating officer of PHSA's COVID-19 EOC

Our employees, physicians and support teams play a critically important role in British Columbia. Now, more than ever, we have an essential and important job to do. We must continue to work together, across PHSA and alongside our health sector partners.

This means prioritizing the work required for COVID-19, as we continue to deliver care and services to patients and families across the province and provide essential supports to the health system. We will continue to evaluate the situation on a daily basis and act in a focused, coordinated, and measured manner.

Our daily bulletins contain the latest workforce information. **Please read them carefully.** The bulletins can be found on POD or phsa.ca/covid19staff.

Highlights:

Breaking news from the provincial government:

1. **B.C. government declares provincial state of emergency**
2. **Canada and U.S. close border to non-essential traffic**

Other important updates:

3. **Use of ibuprofen/Advil**
4. **Working from home**
5. **Schools and child care support**
6. **Thursday's virtual town hall for PHSA employees**

1. B.C. government declares provincial state of emergency

- The B.C. government today declared a [provincial state of emergency](#) to support the province-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- B.C.'s Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General made the declaration based on the recommendation from B.C.'s health and emergency management officials, after Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry declared a public health emergency on March 17.
- Declaring a state of emergency allows the Province, through the Minister, to implement any provincial emergency measures required with access to land and human resource assets that that may be necessary to prevent, respond to or alleviate the effects of an emergency.
- This includes securing the critical supply chains to make sure people have access to essential goods and services, and that infrastructure necessary in a response is readily available.
- The state of emergency is initially in effect for 14 days once issued and may be extended or rescinded as necessary. It applies to the whole province and allows federal, provincial and local resources to be delivered in a co-ordinated effort.

2. Canada & U.S. close border to non-essential traffic

- Earlier today, [Canada and the United States announced](#) that our countries are temporarily closing our border to non-essential travellers for an indefinite period of time in the hopes of fighting the spread of the COVID-19 virus.
- Only “essential” or “urgent” travel will be permitted for the foreseeable future, as well as the transit of goods.
- The Canadian government has not yet specified what constitutes essential travel, but noted that crossing the border for recreational or tourism purposes will not be permitted.
- PHSA appreciates that we have a small number of employees, medical staff, and contractors who live in the U.S. We will provide updates on what this means for these individuals as soon as we have more information.

3. Use of ibuprofen/Advil

- A memo has been circulating on social media branded with the logos of PHSA, VCH and PHC, claiming to cite advice from BCCDC regarding the use of ibuprofen/Advil in relation to COVID-19.
- This is not an authentic memo and it was not issued by BCCDC or any of the health authorities.
- The information about ibuprofen is new and we are reviewing the evidence. In the meantime, since there are alternatives to manage fever, such as acetaminophen, it is prudent to use those.

4. Working from home

- PHSA is closely monitoring announcements from the B.C. government and coordinating with health authority partners to ensure services that are critical to our patients and to our employees can be maintained, while also ensuring the health and safety of our employees.
- We are working on a detailed plan that will include enabling as many employees as possible to work from home. We will have more information in the next short while.

5. Schools and child care support

- Yesterday the B.C. government announced that K-12 classes are suspended indefinitely. We realize this is concerning for many members of our workforce, each of whom plays an important role in delivering care and service.
- We are actively working with the Province and our health authority partners to identify ways we can support child care options for essential workers, including health care workers. More information is forthcoming.

6. Thursday's virtual town hall for PHSA employees

- In the context of COVID-19, we are holding regular (virtual) town halls to address your questions.
- The next town hall will be held on **Thursday, March 19 from 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.**
- There may be challenges with connectivity, due to the importance of sustaining critical business applications.
- We're offering three options for viewing:
 1. **Watch the webcast live:**
<http://mediasite.phsa.ca/Mediasite/Play/e9d60be26ebc4c83959aec0e11b70bda1d>
 2. **Join by teleconference live:** 604-681-0455 (Vancouver) or 1-877-291-3022 (toll free across B.C.), access code: 4478028 #
 3. **Watch the webcast at 12:30 p.m. onwards:** Use the same link above to watch the webcast recording on demand. There is no difference between the live or recorded experience.
- Questions can be submitted in advance via [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) using the event code **#PHSATownHall**. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to help us prioritize for the weekly virtual town halls. Not all questions will be answered directly but they help inform all future communication.

Thank you for your continued dedication

The service that each and every one of you offers for our patients and families – and the essential support you provide to our provincial systems – is critical, and is making a meaningful difference in B.C.

Your ongoing sources of information

- We are sending daily updates. Watch for emails from phsacomm@phsa.ca.
- Continue to send in your questions via [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) using the event code **#PHSATownHall**. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to let us know the priority topics to cover at our virtual town halls and in future communications.
- Continue to check the [BCCDC's website](https://www.bccdc.ca) as a trusted source of information.
- We have opened up a [new staff COVID-19 section on phsa.ca](https://www.phsa.ca) where employees can access the same information that is [posted on POD](#), but when off the network. BCEHS alerts and updates are on the [BCAS intranet](#) and in the [BCEHS Handbook](#). *[Note: you must be on the BCEHS network 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](https://www.who.int).

