



Critical COVID-19 News

Information for employees, medical staff, paramedics and contractors

April 6 at 7:05 p.m.

Today's message is sent on behalf of Benoit Morin, President & CEO, PHSA & PHSA's COVID-19 EOC

On Friday, I shared with you the importance of focusing on facts and in trusting that, in B.C., we are working in a provincially coordinated manner to protect the health and wellness of all citizens, including all of you, our vitally important health care workers.

On any given day, we hear news of how one province or country is managing in the fight against COVID-19 relative to another. Our instinct is to make comparisons and ask, "How do we rate?" This is human nature, but it is important to remember that every community is different – we are in different stages of our response, and with that comes differing needs, be it physical distancing, supplies, testing, or tools to support remote work and ongoing provision of care.

I encourage you to remain calm and focused. Collectively, all of the measures we have put in place are making a difference. Health Minister Adrian Dix offered important perspective today when he referenced how our active partnership with the federal government is yielding national-level solutions, including, but not limited to, the ongoing flow of essential supplies.

Your safety and wellbeing are top of mind in every decision that I, and the PHSA Executive Leadership Team make – and in this, we are backed by our province and our country. I thank you for your continued support and for your tremendous dedication to our patients, and to each other.

Bulletin Highlights:

Important updates:

- 1. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) tool and guidance**
- 2. Use of PPE/masks for those not providing direct patient care**
- 3. Handmade or non-medical mask use while in the community**
- 4. Tomorrow's virtual town hall for PHSA employees**
- 5. Increase in phishing emails targeting health authority employees**
- 6. Coping with COVID-19 team sessions available**
- 7. 21-day self-care challenge**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) decision tool and guidance

- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health issued a [personal protective equipment \(PPE\) allocation framework](#) to guide health authorities in making decisions in allocating PPE. The guidelines focus on the responsible use of PPE across the B.C. health care system.
- Clinical programs (including BCCDC, Children's & Women's, BC Emergency Health Services, BC Cancer and BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services) have received site-specific updates about PPE in their local bulletins.
- Supplementing those updates, [a new PPE decision tool](#) has been developed in collaboration with Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC), Public Health and the local clinical leadership at each of the clinical programs listed above.
- The PPE decision tool helps to interpret the PPE allocation framework across PHSA's various patient care settings and procedures. It can be found in the staff resources section of phsa.ca, [on the PPE page](#).
- PHSA's programs and services provide care to unique populations. As such, there may be local PPE considerations and procedural documents that apply. Please consult your local IPAC representative if you have questions.

Use of PPE/masks for those not providing direct patient care

- B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Dr. Bonnie Henry continues to state that good hand hygiene, physical distancing and respiratory etiquette are your best protections.
- For employees who are not providing direct patient care, here are the best methods to prevent infection:
 - Hand wash for at least 20 seconds.
 - If no sink is readily available, cover all surfaces of your hand with alcohol-based sanitizers until they feel dry.
 - Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Use available disinfectants and products to clean working surfaces.
 - Practice physical distancing and avoid contact with people who are sick.
 - Since the virus is not known to transmit via airborne or skin contact routes, PPE, such as N95 respirators or gloves, is not required for office settings.

Handmade or non-medical mask use while in the community

- During a recent COVID-19 update from the federal government, Canada's chief public health officer, Dr. Theresa Tam, addressed questions regarding the general population wearing masks to protect against the virus, saying that medical masks should be kept for those managing patients, but wearing **non-medical masks** is an additional measure that may be used by those who wish to do so.
- During today's press conference, PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry elaborated on this decision. She has said that, in situations where physical distancing is difficult to maintain, e.g. in public transit or at a grocery store, a handmade or non-medical mask can reduce the chance of your respiratory droplets coming into contact with others or landing on surfaces.
- Wearing a non-medical mask in the community has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. As stated above, Dr. Henry continues to state that good hand hygiene, physical distancing and respiratory etiquette are your best protections.

Tomorrow's virtual town hall for PHSA employees

- Join us at our next virtual town hall for COVID-19 updates and Q&A: **Tuesday, April 7, 2020 from 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.** This town hall will include updates on PPE and information from Human Resources.
- We're offering three options for viewing:
 - 1) **Watch the webcast live at 10:30 a.m. using this link:** <https://mediasite.phsa.ca/Mediasite/Play/692955a85af841749a1266a4786107191d>
There is no password needed to watch. If you are prompted to log in, it means the webcast connections are at capacity (we are prioritizing our clinical applications). Use options 2 or 3.
 - 2) **Listen by teleconference live at 10:30 a.m. by calling: 1-833-353-8610 and using Participant code 4478028 #**
If you hear a busy signal, try calling again. If a message says the conference bridge is full, use option 3.
 - 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 and you do not need to be on the PHSA network.
- Questions can be submitted in advance via [Slido.com](#) using the event code **#PHSATownHall**. 'Like' questions that are similar to yours to help us prioritize topics. Not all questions will be answered directly but they inform future communication.
- To watch previous town hall recordings, visit the [staff resources section of PHSA's website](#). Watch for highlight videos on POD and in PHSA News.

Increase in phishing emails targeting health authority employees

- Health Authorities across B.C. have been experiencing a spike in the number of phishing email attacks over the past few days. This is due to cybercriminals exploiting the uncertainty created by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- These phishing emails are malicious attempts to try and steal sensitive information such as usernames and passwords and it's important that you know how to protect yourself. This is especially important for staff members across PHSA, VCH and PHC who are working remotely (outside of the firewall).
- Being caught out by a phishing email, scam or fake website is a big deal. It can potentially lead to identity theft, financial or medical fraud, or even an attacker gaining control of your computer. **If in doubt don't click!**

How to spot phishing emails

- Cybercriminals often update their tactics for stealing sensitive information, but there are some general signs to help you recognize a phishing email.
- These include emails that: use fake email addresses, have a sense of urgency, are impersonal or use scare tactics, include suspicious links or attachments, and have vague signatures.
- Also look out for emails that:
 - Look like they're from a company you know or trust, such as a bank or a credit card company;
 - Tell a story to trick you into clicking on a link or opening an attachment designed;
 - Have several grammatical mistakes and/or lack a proper health authority email signature.

- Here are some examples of recent phishing emails that have targeted B.C. health authorities:
 - **“Receive COVID-19 benefits”**: This phishing email (domain “@ekmd.huji.ac.il”) pretends to be from an internal business department instructing recipients click on a link to receive payroll benefits.
 - **“Update banking profile”**: This phishing email (domain “azatelecom.com”) pretends to be from a trusted source, the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC). It requests that all RBC clients update their banking profile.
 - **“Migrate to 2020 Microsoft Outlook”**: This phishing email pretends to be from an internal IT support department instructing recipients to click on a link to access a “New 2020 Microsoft Outlook Web Portal.”
- These are only a few examples of the many phishing emails health authority employees need to be cautious of in the upcoming days and weeks.
- To learn more, watch our video: [Phishing. What you need to know!](#) or ask us a question at IMITSSecurity@phsa.ca

Coping with COVID-19 team sessions available

- Coping with COVID-19 team sessions are a service that leaders can request to bring their teams together to share their experiences and coping strategies in working during COVID-19.
- We have a group of trained facilitators from Workplace Wellness and Leadership Development, along with Children’s & Women’s Psychology and Social Work, who are available to lead these sessions and provide direct support and access to more resources.
- Please email workplacewellness@cw.bc.ca to request a ‘Coping with COVID-19’ team session for your team.

21-day self-care challenge

- We encourage you to consider taking the 21-day self-care challenge starting **Monday April 13th** and incorporate positive self-care habits into your day.
- This challenge is a great way to incorporate your resiliency skills into your daily life during this time of uncertainty.
- If you sign up, you will receive a self-care challenge email for 21 days encouraging you to adopt a proposed self-care habit into your day.
- These self-care habits are intended to be brief and allow you to develop a practice that protects your wellbeing.
- [Sign up on LearningHub](#) to receive the daily self-care challenge email.

Thank you for your continued dedication

The service that each and every one of you offers for patients and families – and the essential support you provide to 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.
- Send in your questions via [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.

- Check the [BCCDC's website](#) as a trusted source of information.
- Visit the [staff COVID-19 section on phsa.ca](#) to access [PHSA News](#) and COVID-19 information when off the network.
- For BCEHS alerts and updates, check 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](#).