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INTRODUCTION

This guide is designed to provide useful information for coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. The guide focuses on how you can care for yourself and others during the worldwide spread of a new disease, as is happening now with COVID-19.

COVID-19: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and the common cold. Symptoms include coughing, fever, sore throat and difficulty breathing.

COVID-19 is spread by liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. The contaminated droplets can enter the body through the eyes, nose or throat if you are in close contact. The droplets quickly fall to the ground or land on surfaces that an infected person touches.

Elders, people with chronic health or respiratory conditions, and people with compromised immune systems due to disease or treatment have a higher risk of getting serious complications if they become sick. As well, pregnant women may have a higher risk of serious complications if they become sick.

Because this coronavirus is new to the human population, there are currently no vaccines developed to prevent infection. Research and development of a COVID-19 vaccine are underway. It generally takes 12 to 18 months to develop a vaccine for a new disease and to produce enough vaccine for large populations.
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION
How to Avoid and Limit the Spread of Infection

HANDWASHING
The most important thing you can do to prevent infection is to wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If a sink is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60 per cent alcohol to clean your hands. It’s safe to wash your hands with soap and water if you are living in a community with a Boil Water Advisory (BWA) or a Do Not Consume (DNC) advisory. However, if you are living with a Do Not Use (DNU) advisory you should wash your hands with bottled water.

COUGH ETIQUETTE
If you need to cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue to limit the spread of infection. Throw the tissue away immediately and wash your hands.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING
Physical distancing is essential to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Be sure to practice safe physical distancing protocols. Inside your “bubble” (your immediate household, for example) you may connect by hugging or kissing and you do not need to stay two metres apart. Outside of your bubble, please continue to protect your personal space by staying at least two metres away from others. During the pandemic, we need to avoid using the usual greetings, such as handshakes, hugs, and kisses, with people outside of our bubble. Safe greetings include a wave, a nod, or a bow.
SOCIAL GATHERINGS AND TRAVEL
All social gathering and events are suspended to significantly reduce COVID-19 transmission related to social interactions. No social gatherings of any size are allowed at your home with anyone other than the members of your immediate household. For example, do not invite friends or family members that live outside your home into your home. Also, do not gather in your backyard, patio, driveway or anywhere else on your property. Hosting play dates for children at your home is not permitted at this time. You may go for a walk or a hike outside with others while physically distancing. This is not considered a social gathering.

TRAVEL
All non-essential travel outside of your community should be avoided. For example, do not travel for a vacation or to visit friends or family members outside of your household or core bubble. Essential travel within B.C. includes regular travel for work within your region and travel for things like medical appointments and hospital visits. Many First Nations communities have declared a state of emergency and have enacted COVID-19 community protection by-laws, including travel bans for non-residents and non-essential visitors.

FACEMASKS
Non-medical facemasks are being used during COVID-19 to reduce transmission of the virus. While wearing a facemask may not protect you from COVID-19, it helps to protect others. Facemasks must be worn in all public indoor settings, such as grocery shopping, and also while using transit. Be sure to wash your facemask between uses.

CLEANING AND LAUNDRY
The COVID-19 virus can survive on porous surfaces such as skin and cloth as well as other materials and surfaces for hours to days, depending on the surface. Regular household cleaners are effective at removing germs. You may also use a solution of one part bleach mixed with nine parts water to disinfect areas that are touched often such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, light switches, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets and bedside tables. If you are doing your laundry at a laundromat, wipe down the controls and handles on the washer/dryer before and after using it.

COVID-19 VACCINATION
Getting the COVID-19 vaccine not only protects you from the virus but it will also protect everyone around you too. You will need two doses of the vaccine. The second dose is administered between 21 and 42 days after the first.

The more people in a community who are vaccinated and therefore protected from COVID-19, the harder it is for the virus to spread. As more people get vaccinated, we will be able to return to activities that haven't been possible during the pandemic.

Learn more here.
SYMPTOMS AND TESTING

You can use this easy self-assessment tool from the BC provincial government [https://bc.thrive.health/](https://bc.thrive.health/) to help determine whether you or a loved one need further assessment or testing for COVID-19. Testing is available for everyone who needs it. If symptoms appear, self-isolate and call your health care provider or 8-1-1 for guidance.

COVID-19 is tested using a “standard swab,” i.e., a long Q-tip that scrapes cells from the very back of the nose or throat. These swabs are sent to a laboratory for testing. Click on the links below for a list of collection centres (i.e., testing site locations) in BC to find one near you. You can also call 8-1-1, your family doctor or your community health nurse to find the nearest collection centre.

- [Collection centre finder](https://bc.thrive.health/) (for mobile and desktop)
- [Collection centre finder](https://bc.thrive.health/) (for Internet Explorer)

If you need to be tested for COVID-19 and you cannot get to the testing location on your own, please call the BC Ambulance non-emergency line at [604-872-5151](tel:604-872-5151) for help travelling to the testing location.

**COVID-19 TESTING AND STIGMA**

It is essential that we all feel safe and confident getting tested for COVID-19, and that those who test positive still feel supported in their recovery and are not discriminated against.

Let’s be kind to each other and thankful for all of the efforts and protective measures that individuals and communities are taking for the safety of us all.

Read more about kindness and COVID-19 [here](https://bc.thrive.health/).
MANAGING ILLNESS AND SELF-ISOLATION

SELF-ISOLATION AT HOME

Self-isolation means staying at home, not going to work or school, and minimizing how often you leave home.

- If testing and contact tracing show that you have been exposed to the virus, a member of the Public Health team will notify you and ask you to self-isolate, even if you have no symptoms. It is important to self-isolate, even when you don't show symptoms, so that if you develop COVID-19 you won't spread it to others in the community. During your self-isolation period, self-monitor for any developing symptoms and inform the Public Health team if you do develop symptoms.

- If you are experiencing symptoms, you need to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the date of the onset of symptoms. You are eligible for testing (see section above). If you test negative for COVID-19, you may still need to self-isolate. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-isolate. Please monitor your symptoms carefully and call 8-1-1 or your health care provider if you are unsure.

If you are infected and live with other people, you can still self-isolate at home. Stay and sleep in a room with good airflow that is away from others. Use a separate bathroom if you can. If you are in the same room with anyone, avoid face-to-face contact and wear a facemask. Friends and family can drop off food outside your room or home.

Note that if one person in the household tests positive for COVID-19, the whole household needs to self-isolate even if the other household members do not have symptoms because they have been in close contact with a confirmed case. Your Community Health Nurse or the Public Health team would provide further instructions related to this. If you live with an Elder or someone with a chronic health condition, that person would be better protected if they stayed in the home of other family members or friends nearby.

Health Benefits related to transportation and accommodation are available to support self-isolation. Details are in the FNHA Health Benefits Available section on page 10.
HOUSEKEEPING AND CLEANING

Keep the personal items such as toothbrush, cups, and cell phones of those who are sick separate from everyone else’s. Put all used paper towels, masks and tissues into trash bins lined with a plastic bag and empty the garbage frequently. Be sure to wash your hands afterwards. Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with those who are sick. Place laundry in a laundry basket with a plastic liner. Wash your laundry with regular laundry detergent and hot water and dry it on a high temperature setting until it’s completely dry. If you usually do your laundry at a laundromat, please ask a family member or close friend that is not in your immediate household to wash your laundry on your behalf. It is important that you stay home as much as possible, unless you are leaving your home for medical care.

Clean hard surfaces such as taps, counters, doorknobs, light switches, telephones and railings with a disinfectant or bleach solution multiple times per day. Note that cleaning physically removes, rather than kills, viruses and bacteria. First clean with water, detergent, and steady friction from a washcloth or rag. Then disinfection after cleaning to kill viruses and bacteria. Use disinfectant solution only on objects, never on the human body.

Items to have on Hand

- Non-perishable food items, such as canned or frozen soups, juices, fruits and vegetables, canned fish, crackers, and peanut butter
- Household cleaning supplies, such as bleach or disinfectant, dishwashing soap and paper towels
- Personal hygiene products such as soap, hand sanitizer, shampoo and toilet paper
- A fever thermometer and over-the-counter fever medications, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- Prescription medications
FOOD AND SHOPPING

Eating a variety of foods including traditional foods, fruits, vegetables, proteins and whole grains helps support your immune system and your mental and emotional wellness. Even though COVID-19 is not spread by eating food contaminated with the virus, be sure to wash your hands before preparing and eating food.

Grocery shopping tips:

- Choose a “designated shopper,” i.e., one person in your household who is safely able to do the grocery shopping
- Make a meal plan and a shopping list
- Plan to buy enough food to last 1-2 weeks for your household
- Choose fruits and vegetables that last longer in the refrigerator or are frozen easily
- Freezing milk works well and is safe, allowing you to buy larger quantities without worrying about the milk spoiling
- While at the store, avoid touching items you probably won’t buy
LOOKING AFTER LOVED ONES

- Providing supportive care to loved ones who are sick at home includes helping them to rest, drink plenty of fluids, and use a pain reliever for fever and body aches.
- If you are providing direct care to someone who is sick, avoid visiting other people.
- If possible, have only one person care for those who are sick to limit the number of people exposed.
- If you can, find a person who can be your “buddy” so that if you get sick, your buddy can go to the pharmacy or store for you – and you can be someone else’s buddy too.
- You can use technology such as phone and video calls to keep in touch with friends, family members and others in your community or neighbourhood.
- You can offer to get groceries and run errands for people who are sick or are at higher risk of getting serious complications if they become sick.
- Keep emergency phone numbers in a place where everyone in the household can find them.

MEDICATION

Anti-fever medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) can help ease the symptoms of COVID-19. If you need medication, use a pharmacy delivery service or ask a friend or family member that is not in your bubble to pick up your medication and bring it to your home. Call your pharmacy ahead of time to ask about options. Temporary coverage for over-the-counter drugs for pain and fever are available through Health Benefits, as is mileage for medication pickup. Details are in the FNHA Health Benefits Available section on page 11.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE

If your symptoms are mild and you live in a rural or remote area, it is possible to move closer to an equipped medical facility so that you can more easily access health care if you need to. If your symptoms are severe, such as shortness of breath, chest pain or if a fever continues more than three days despite taking anti-fever medication, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest Emergency Department. Call ahead before you get medical care. By calling ahead, you help the clinic, hospital, lab or doctor’s office prepare for your visit and stop the spread of germs.
MEDICAL SUPPORT

FIRST NATIONS VIRTUAL DOCTOR OF THE DAY
You may not have easy access to a primary care health provider due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program enables BC First Nations individuals to make virtual appointments with a doctor. The program supports First Nations people and their family members who live on-reserve or away-from-home (off-reserve) and who have limited or no access to their family doctor. The First Nations Virtual Doctor of the Day program includes doctors of Indigenous ancestry and all doctors follow the principles and practices of cultural safety and humility.

If you do not have a doctor of your own or if you have lost access to your doctor due to the COVID-19 pandemic, call 1-855-344-3800 to book an appointment. Medical office assistants are available to help you seven days per week from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

FIRST NATIONS VIRTUAL SUBSTANCE USE AND PSYCHIATRY SERVICE
This service provides individuals with access to specialists in addictions medicine and psychiatry. It is a referral-based service and is available at no cost to all BC First Nations people and their family members, even if those family members are not Indigenous. Specialists are dedicated to the principles and practices of cultural safety and humility, and to delivering trauma-informed care. Learn more here.

FNHA HEALTH BENEFITS AVAILABLE
Medical Transportation Benefits to Support Self-isolation
If you need to self-isolate or have tested positive for COVID-19, Medical Transportation benefits may be available to assist you. You may be eligible for isolation support if you meet one or more of the following conditions:

- Are returning to Canada from international travel including the United States;
- Are confirmed as having COVID-19 or have been in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19;
- Are returning to community from a high-risk location or environment including work camps, care facilities, or communities experiencing an outbreak;
- Belong to vulnerable population groups (identified on next page) that would have difficulties self-isolating due to issues with transportation, food delivery, medical requirements, or where COVID-19 is present in the community;
- Have symptoms of COVID-19 but no confirmed testing; or
- Have a positive COVID-19 test and live more than 2 hours from a hospital.
The FNHA Health Benefits program will provide Medical Transportation Benefits to the following groups:

- Elders (60+);
- People with pre-existing chronic conditions (such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, asthma, renal disease, heart disease);
- People with compromised immune systems due to disease or treatment (i.e., treatment of cancer or organ transplantation, with the associated increased range of chronic illnesses and inflammatory conditions);
- Children under 5 years of age and infants; and
- Pregnant women

If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 and were told to recover at home, your household members may be eligible to access Medical Transportation benefits to stay elsewhere.

The FNHA Health Benefits Isolation Support team can help you with accommodation, travel and meals if you need to self-isolate. To find out if you are eligible or if you have any self-isolation transportation questions, please call 1-888-305-1505 between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days per week.

Temporary Mileage Coverage for Medication Pickup

The FNHA is supporting communities to coordinate medication delivery and pickup for all community members. If your community is not coordinating medication delivery and pickup or if your pharmacy is unable to deliver medications, you may be eligible for temporary mileage coverage to pick up your medication. Contact your patient travel clerk or call Health Benefits at 1-855-550-5454 to see if you are eligible for mileage coverage.

Over-the-Counter Drugs for Pain and Fever are Temporarily Available

To encourage physical distancing and reduce the number of doctor’s visits, pharmacists can now temporarily dispense pain and fever over-the-counter medications without a prescription. Acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen and acetylsalicylic acid products are now temporarily included on Plan W’s pharmacist-initiated treatment list.
Aboriginal Patient Navigators
Aboriginal Patient Navigators (APNs) connect with Aboriginal patients and family members, health care professionals, and other service providers in your region to ensure Aboriginal patients receive culturally safe, appropriate and timely care, whether in hospital or in community. Note that APNs are also referred to as Aboriginal Patient Liaisons or Aboriginal Liaison Nurses, depending on the region in which you live.

FRASER SALISH REGION:
- If you live in Surrey, Delta, White Rock, Langley and Tsawwassen, call the Aboriginal Mental Health Liaison at 604-953-4900 ext. 763041
- If you live in Mission, call the Aboriginal Mental Health Case Manager at 604-814-5642

INTERIOR REGION:
- This webpage provides a detailed list of APNs and contact information based on where you live in the Interior: https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourHealth/AboriginalHealth/Partnerships/Documents/APN_Contact.pdf
- Main telephone number: 250-469-7070

NORTHERN REGION:
- This webpage provides a detailed list of Aboriginal Patient Liaisons and contact information based on where you live in the North: https://www.indigenoushealthnh.ca/initiatives/APLs
- Main telephone number: 250-649-7226

VANCOUVER ISLAND REGION:
- This webpage provides a detailed list of Aboriginal Liaison Nurses and contact information based on where you live on Vancouver Island: https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-services/aboriginal-health-services/aboriginal-liaison-nurses
- Main telephone number: 1-877-370-8699 (toll-free)

VANCOUVER COASTAL REGION:
- Call 1-877-875-1131 (toll-free)
- More information: http://www.vch.ca/Locations-Services/result?res_id=771
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SUPPORTS

Feeling worried during a crisis is quite normal. You may have feelings of distress due to the uncertainty we are experiencing. You might even find that the COVID-19 pandemic triggers symptoms of trauma. Living through a pandemic can affect mental health and wellness. By being aware of these negative impacts on our wellness, we are better able to cope with them.

By staying connected to each other, supporting each other, and helping each other to maintain and build our resilience, we will get through this pandemic. Please reach out and connect with family members, friends, and health providers when you need to. Try and check in with your family members regularly to see how they are doing.

Health Benefits administers coverage for mental health counselling through three programs:

1. Mental Wellness and Counselling;
2. The Indian Residential School Resolution Health Support Program; and

Counselling appointments are available for in-person or virtual sessions conducted by phone or video conferencing (e.g., Zoom, Skype or FaceTime).

Contact your mental health provider to see if you can schedule a counselling appointment. When you talk to your provider, you should discuss what option they like and also explain what you feel the most comfortable with.

As long as you are seeing a mental health provider who is registered with Health Benefits, all sessions are fully covered.

To learn more about these benefits or to find a registered mental health provider, call: 1-855-550-5454 or visit https://www.fnha.ca/benefits/mental-health
Here are some mental wellness and cultural supports available to you:

- **Mental Health and Cultural Supports**

- **Staying Connected during the Pandemic**

- **Impacts of the Pandemic on Mental Health and Wellness**

- **Coping with COVID-19**
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDD6kKTEDp0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDD6kKTEDp0) (video)

- **The Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health and Wellness**
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swGXDMjOMIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swGXDMjOMIM) (video)

- **Coping with Domestic Violence**

RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- First Nations Health Authority
- BC Centre for Disease Control
- COVID-19 Resources available for all BC First Nations Individuals (status and non-status)
- Food Security for BC First Nations Communities
- COVID-19 Updates from Indigenous Services Canada
- Quick Guide for Individuals: COVID-19 Response Plan

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR SELF-ISOLATION SUPPORT?
To find out about self-isolation supports that you may be eligible for, call 1-888-305-1505 between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. seven days per week and the FNHA Health Benefits Isolation Support team can help you.

ASK YOUR LOCAL FNHA COMMUNITY RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVE
Community relations representatives have a deep knowledge of FNHA's Health Benefits program. If you have any questions related to Health Benefits, call the community relations representative in your region:

- **Fraser Salish region:** James Delorme  
  Tel: 778-684-1886 or Email: james.delorme@fnha.ca

- **Interior region:** Joyce Kenoras  
  Tel: 250-318-6634 or Email: joyce.kenoras@fnha.ca

- **Northern region:** Lindsey Larsen  
  Tel: 250-960-9201 or Email: lindsey.larsen@fnha.ca

- **Vancouver Coastal region:** Jenny Smith  
  Tel: 604-785-6955 or Email: jennifer.smith@fnha.ca

- **Vancouver Island region:** Candy-Lea Chickite  
  Tel: 250-830-7346 or Email: lea.chickite@fnha.ca