Navigating COVID-19  
Frequently Asked Questions by Health Professionals

**Information to Share with Community Members**

1. Where can I find the most up to date information to share with community members about COVID-19?
2. What resources are available for community members who have ongoing care needs following COVID-19 infection?
3. What can I do to ease concerns of community members?
4. What is the current recommendation regarding the use of non-medical grade masks by community members?
5. What can I share with community members and leadership about new variants of the SARS-COV-2?

**Resources for Community Health Nurses**

1. What is the current status of the COVID-19 outbreak?
2. Where can I find the most up to date clinical resources regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine for Health Professionals in British Columbia?
3. Who should I contact if I have questions about communicable disease management in First Nations Communities?

**Infection Prevention and Control**

1. What is the recommended Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for COVID-19?
2. How can I request more supplies for my Community?
3. Are there changes to Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures in a pandemic?

**CD Management in community**

1. What is the responsibility of the Regional Health Authority (RHA) CD Unit/MHO and what is my responsibility as a CHN related to COVID-19 case and contact follow up?
2. Who should self-isolate and for how long?
3. If I learn of someone self-isolating or self-monitoring in community, how do I proceed?
4. What measures can community members take if they are living with or caring for someone who is a close contact of a person with COVID-19?
5. What messaging should I give to community members if they are symptomatic?
6. What do I do if there are rumors in the community or on social media of a contact of COVID-19 in my community?

**Information to Share with community members**

1. Where can I find the most up to date information to share with community members about COVID-19?

Please direct community members to frequently updated, reliable web sources. See links to reliable web sources below:

- **FNHA:** [https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/coronavirus](https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/coronavirus)
- **BCCDC:** [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19)
2. What resources are available for community members who have ongoing care needs following COVID-19 infection?
PHSA’s Post COVID-19 Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network is available to support the best possible outcomes for people who have experienced serious cases of COVID-19. Individuals must be referred to a clinic by their primary care provider and further information can be found here. The network has also developed education tools and resources available to individuals and healthcare workers, independent of accessing the clinics.

3. What can I do to ease concerns of community members?
Continue to share key messages of what community members can do to prevent the spread of infection for themselves, their family and their community.

A pandemic can create overwhelming concern and anxiety. It can also bring up historical trauma and fear related to the spread of communicable diseases in First Nations Communities. Nurses working in First Nations Communities are well equipped to answer questions from community members with a trauma-informed and culturally safe approach.

The KUU-US Crisis Line Society provides a First Nations and Indigenous specific crisis line available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, toll-free from anywhere in British Columbia. The KUU- US Crisis Line can be reached toll-free at 1-800-588-8717. Alternatively, individuals can call direct into the Youth Line at 250-723-2040 or the Adult Line at 250-723-4050. Please also see: https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-COVID-19-Mental-Health-and-Cultural-Supports.pdf

4. What is the current recommendation regarding the use of non-medical grade masks by community members?
Masks are one of many layers of protection we use to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measures such as complete COVID-19 vaccine series, frequent hand washing, and avoiding crowded spaces. Masks are required to be worn in public indoor spaces by everyone over aged 5 and older regardless of their vaccination status, as per PHO order on masks in public indoor settings.

Masks are most effective when fitted, worn and handled correctly. They act as a barrier and help stop the spread of droplets from a person’s mouth and nose when talking, laughing, yelling, singing, coughing, or sneezing.

Masks should:
• Cover the mouth and nose and go under the chin
• Fit tightly with no gaps (consider adjustable masks)
• Be made of three layers of fabric, including two layers of tightly-woven fabric, with a filter or filter fabric between layers.
• If there are two layers with a pocket for a filter, use a filter.
• Homemade masks should have at least three layers to make sure that droplets don’t pass through the fabric. The most important thing is having these three layers with a mask that fits well. Homemade masks
can be made from different materials, but some materials are better than others. Use clean 100% cotton, polyester or a cotton-polyester blend. For further information, please see: BCCDC masks And Non-medical masks: Sew and no-sew instructions

- Some people cannot wear a mask because they cannot put on or remove a mask on their own or for psychological, behavioural or health conditions. Some people may also need to remove their masks to communicate due to a hearing impairment. Be respectful of people who can't wear a mask.
- Wear a mask if you are sick and cannot distance from others at home. Learn more about the precautions you should take if you are sick.
- Wear a medical mask if you are caring for a person with symptoms of COVID-19. This is particularly important if you will be in direct contact with a sick person's droplets, saliva or other bodily fluids. Learn more about caring for someone with COVID-19.
- Do not put a face mask or any covering including visors and eye protection on infants under two years of age. A facemask or covering will make it difficult for a baby to breathe because their airways are still small. There is also a risk that parts of the facemask, visor or eye protection can come off and become a choking hazard. See information about keeping your baby safe during COVID-19 from Perinatal Services BC.

Please see general guidance from FNHA for Community Members here: https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/homemade-face-masks

5. What can I share with community members and leadership about new variants of the SARS-COV-2? For the most up to date information on variants in BC, please see: http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/about-covid-19/variants And http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/data#Nationaldata


Resources for Community Health Nurses

1. What is the current status of the COVID-19 outbreak? On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global Pandemic due the number of cases that have now spread throughout the world. Declaration of a pandemic allows for another level of support to be offered. Internationally, this allows for international support and resources to be made available to countries that may lack the infrastructure and ability to manage their public's healthcare related to COVID-19. In Canada, this means support at both provincial and federal levels can be activated.

On March 16, 2020, British Columbia declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a Public Health Emergency under the Public Health Act. Declaring a Public Health Emergency provides the Provincial Health Officer the ability
to issue verbal orders that can be enforced. Please see [EmergencyInfoBC](https://news.gov.bc.ca/ministries/health) for information on extension of the Provincial State of Emergency. Please refer to Joint Statements by the Health Minister and Provincial Medical Health officer found here: [https://news.gov.bc.ca/ministries/health](https://news.gov.bc.ca/ministries/health)

In December 2020, British Columbia's COVID-19 Immunization Plan began at Phase 1 with the high-risk population. For further information on BC's COVID-19 Immunization Plan, please see [COVID-19 Vaccine (bccdc.ca)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/plan) And [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/plan](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/plan)

For further information on current provincial and national COVID-19 vaccine coverage rates, please see: [COVID-19 vaccination coverage in Canada - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html#faq) And [B.C.'s response to COVID-19 - Province of British Columbia (gov.bc.ca)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/vaccine/plan)


2. Where can I find the most up to date clinical resources regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine for Health Professionals in British Columbia?

BCCDC is regularly updating provincial clinical resources for Health Professionals. Please refer to the Interim Guidelines found here: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care) For information related to the COVID-19 vaccine, please see: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/resources-for-health-professionals](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/resources-for-health-professionals)

Please also refer to the most current Provincial Health Officer (PHO) Orders that can be found here: [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus)

Ensure your Community's Communicable Disease Emergency Response Plan (Formerly known as Pandemic Influenza Plan) is up to date and has been tested (i.e. tabletop exercise). If your Communicable Disease Emergency Response Plan is out of date, please download a copy from [https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/communicable-disease-emergency-response](https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/communicable-disease-emergency-response)

3. Who should I contact if I have questions about communicable disease management in First Nations Communities?

Please contact your Community Health Practice Consultants for your region. For Nurses who have clinical questions please email cdmgmt@fnha.ca or call 1-844-364-2232 (toll-free, option 3). For information about ordering PPE for your communities, please email covid19needs@fnha.ca For all other non-clinical COVID-19 inquiries, please email covid19@fnha.ca For all Infection Prevention and Control inquiries, please email IPC@fnha.ca For all Vaccine related questions, please email Immunize@fnha.ca
Infection Prevention and Control

1. **What is the recommended Personal Protective Equipment for COVID-19?**

2. **How can I request more supplies for my Community?**
   Communities are encouraged to continue ordering supplies through regular channels as much as possible (in addition to supplies being made available through our provincial and federal partners.)
   Please refer to the FNHA COVID-19: Information for Community Leaders webpage to access the BC First Nations Community Guide for Additional Supports Needed. The ANNEX A: Personal Protective Equipment and COVID Testing Supplies Request Process and Form is also available on this webpage.

   Are N95 respirators required?
   N95 respirators are not required nor recommended for community members.

3. **Are there changes to Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures in a pandemic?**
   It is recommended that health care professionals diligently continue with current routine IPC measures, including Point of Care Risk Assessments and additional precautions (i.e. Having all clients and visitors in a health care facility wear a mask, frequent hand washing, contact and droplet precautions, and equipment and environmental cleaning and disinfection.)

   Due to the ongoing limited supplies of PPE in British Columbia, appropriate and safe conservation measures for PPE should be implemented. Conserving individual pieces of PPE is part of a larger process of re-aligning care delivery to promote client and staff safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

   It is important that all health care professionals work together to conserve our PPE. For additional information, please see this link: [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/infection-control/personal-protective-equipment#Provincial--PPE--supply](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/infection-control/personal-protective-equipment#Provincial--PPE--supply)

   And
   An Interim Guide to Personal Protective Equipment

   For N95 respirator use requirements please also see An Interim Guide to Using Personal Protective Equipment.

   Where can I get fit testing done?
   In British Columbia, it is an Occupational Health requirement that fit-testing be completed annually for health care staff.

   If there is no one trained and designated as a fit tester in health care facility, an option for communities may be to contact the local Public Health Unit or an established contact within the Regional Health Authority that may be able to visit you and provide fit testing for health care staff. Occasionally, there are Train the Trainer workshops hosted by educators in the Regional Health Authority that can be accessed. FNHA Occupational Health Safety and Wellness Team is able to lend fit testing kits to communities once there is a trainer able to use the kit. They may be reached at safetymatters@fnha.ca.
CD Management in Community

1. **What is the responsibility of the Regional Health Authority CD unit/MHO and what is my responsibility as a CHN related to COVID-19 case and contact follow up?**

   The statutory responsibility for CD follow-up lies with the Regional Health Authority (RHA) - as it flows from the Public Health Act to the regional Medical Health Officers. If a case lives in a First Nations community, lives off-reserve and receives services in a First Nations community, or has identified contacts within a First Nations community, the COVID-19 Adapted Regional Health Authority - First Nations Health Authority Communicable Disease Protocol provides information on the roles, responsibilities and activities of the First Nations Health Authority and the Regional Health Authorities to guide the collaborative follow-up of such individuals. Your role as a CHN is one of collaboration with the RHA as needed for case and contact follow-up. If CHNs are asked to help the RHA with case interviews or contact follow up, the most up to date case and contact follow-up templates will be provided by the RHA. Also see Public health processes and the role of communities during COVID-19.

2. **Who should self-isolate and for how long?**

   Guidance for self-isolation depends on possible exposure, vaccination history and presence of symptoms. When you need to start self-isolating and how long you need to keep isolating depends on many factors. Please consult with the RHA CD Unit and the BCCDC Guidance: Public Health Management of Cases and Contacts Associated with Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Community when providing guidance on self-isolation dates.

   **International traveller returning to BC:**

   Travellers entering Canada must follow testing and quarantine requirements. There are some exemptions for fully vaccinated travellers and children or dependents who are permitted to enter Canada. Learn more about vaccinated travellers entering Canada.

   For those who are not eligible for the fully vaccinated traveller exemption, it is mandatory under the Quarantine Act to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days upon arrival. Follow the instructions provided by the Government of Canada.

   Before entering Canada, you must complete the federal ArriveCAN application digitally. After entry into Canada, you must use the ArriveCAN app daily to submit your COVID-19 Self-Assessment. During your quarantine period as a traveller, if you develop any symptom of COVID-19, get tested. If you test positive for COVID-19 or if you are exposed to another person subject to the quarantine order who exhibits signs and symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19, you will need to extend your self-isolation. If you don't develop symptoms, and are not exposed to someone else who does, your self-isolation can end 14 days after you arrived in Canada.

   Visit How to Self-Isolate for more details on self-isolation measures.

   **If you have COVID-19:** If your symptoms can be managed at home, self-isolate there for at least 10 days since the start of your symptoms. You should keep self-isolating until you feel better and your fever is gone without the use of fever reducing medication. Public health will let you know if you need to self-isolate for more than 10 days.

   Visit How to Self-Isolate for more details on caring for yourself and reducing the spread of the virus to others.

   Note: The COVID-19 self-isolation period has been reduced from 14 to 10 days for individuals who had a COVID-19 exposure and have been identified as close contacts by Public Health. Research evidence shows that 10 days is now long enough to prevent most community spread of COVID-19. Also, for
further information, please see the BCCDC Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Interim Guidelines

3. **If I learn of someone self-isolating or self-monitoring in community, how do I proceed?**

If a community member has been advised by the Regional Health Authority CD Unit to self-isolate or self-monitor, they will receive instructions found at: 
http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation

Clarifying the situation first is of the upmost importance. Please consider the following questions:

- Was the individual notified they were a contact to a confirmed case by the RHA or by Public Notice? Was this related to returning from travel? If not, through what means?
- What was the messaging they received around self-monitoring, self-isolating and what to do if symptoms develop?

Please support individual by reinforcing the messages they have received from the RHA CD Unit, or from the Public Notice. If the individual requires more information, please direct them to appropriate information on BCCDC’s webpage.

Contact tracing is not done for contacts. Contact tracing would be initiated by the RHA MHO. You as the CHN may be asked to support the RHA with contact tracing. It would be a breach of confidentiality to share information about contacts or cases of COVID-19 outside of the circle of care.

Information for close contacts can be found here: 
http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation/close-contacts

4. **What measures can community members take if they are living with or caring for someone who is a close contact of a person with COVID-19?**

If you live with or are caring for someone who is a close contact of a person with COVID-19, think about steps you can take to limit the spread of COVID-19. People who are close contacts have a much greater chance of developing COVID-19. Close contacts can become infectious and spread COVID-19 to people around them, even if they don’t show symptoms. For example, if you are a parent of a child who is self-isolating, there are steps you can take to help protect others while you care for your child, such as working from home or avoiding contact with seniors or others with chronic health conditions. Review BCCDC’s guide for caregivers and consider applying some of the public health measures recommended in that document. If you live with a close contact, see the guide for cleaning and disinfecting your home for tips on how to reduce your exposure while your close contact is self-isolating.

All international travellers entering Canada:
Travellers entering Canada must follow testing and quarantine requirements. There are some exemptions for fully vaccinated travellers and children or dependents who are permitted to enter Canada.
Learn more about vaccinated travellers entering Canada. They cannot quarantine in group living environments.

Quarantining with others in the same household:
Travellers who are under quarantine must avoid contact with anyone they did not travel with. 
• stay in separate rooms
• use separate bathrooms (if possible)
• keep surfaces clean
• avoid sharing personal items
• limit interactions with others in the household
Co-habitants should also follow the guidance of their local public health authorities. For further information on mandatory quarantine or isolation, please see:
And
http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation

Also, please direct community members to the following:
And:

5. What messaging should I give to community members if they are symptomatic?
Start your self-isolation right away even if they have received a full COVID-19 vaccine series. If you have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 follow the instructions for How to Self-Isolate to reduce the spread of the virus.

The length of time you will need to self-isolate depends on many factors. Review the How Long do I need to Self-Isolate page to learn more.

Visit BCCDC’s testing page to learn more about when you need to get a COVID-19 test.
If testing is not recommended, you need to self-isolate until you feel better and no longer have fever without the use of fever reducing medication. Seek medical advice if your symptoms get worse.

If you are returning from travelling outside of Canada, you still need to follow the quarantine requirements and self-isolate for at least 14 days after your return to Canada, perhaps longer depending on your symptoms and when you developed them.

If you need to get tested, be careful about how you get to the test site. Walk or drive yourself if you can or have someone drive you, making sure you wear a mask and keep windows rolled down during the trip. If you need to take a taxi or ride share, you must also wear a mask and keep windows open. If you must take transit, wear your mask and keep yourself 2 metres apart from others as much as possible. Continue to self-isolate until you get your test results and then follow the self-isolation period recommended for your result.

Please avoid going to the emergency department for COVID-19 testing. Examples of reasons to go to an emergency department include if you or someone in your care has chest pains, difficulty breathing, or severe bleeding, as these may be signs of a life-threatening emergency. Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number immediately.
Acutely ill clients would seek medical care at the local acute care settings. If the community member needs to seek medical attention, advise the community member to call ahead to local facilities so they can prepare in advance.
Please see BCCDC’s If You Have COVID-19 page for information on how to take care of yourself and self-isolate to help prevent the virus from spreading to others if you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have been told you have COVID-19.
6. **What do I do if there are rumors in the community or on social media of a contact of COVID-19 in my community?**

If able to, please contact the source of the rumor to attempt to assess the validity of the rumor.

If you are approached by community members with concerns about a contact in your community, the **ASK** approach may also be useful in your communication.

- **Acknowledge** any concerns brought forward
- **Steer** the conversation to refute the myths
- **Knowledge** - Provide accurate information and resources