

Effective Strategies to Protect Against COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, has created a shift in the way care providers and staff are being asked to practice in their usual work environments. This illness poses a significant threat in the Long-term Care (LTC) and congregate living settings given the higher susceptibility for residents to experience severe outcomes as a result of the disease, with a high number of deaths occurring in LTC settings worldwide. Given the heightened risk posed by COVID-19 for residents in these settings, we ask all care providers and staff practice the following strategies at all times:

Perform Strict Hand Hygiene

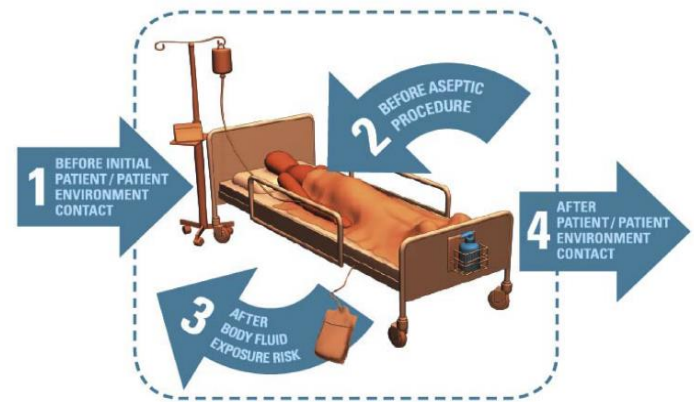
Why?

Hand Hygiene (HH) is a well-established and a powerful tool utilized in order to break the chain of infection and crucial way in which we can protect ourselves, residents, colleagues and family.

There have been variable levels of adherence to HH practices in our facilities, with HH audits done regularly. A recent report highlights HH compliance from Dec 2019-March 2020, in our LTC facilities ranges from 57-94%, averaging at 81%. Of the 19% miss, 85% of these were attributable to no HH before or after patient care.



The 4 Moments for Hand Hygiene



HH should be performed with Hand Sanitizer and/or Soap & Water in the 4 Moments of HH

Table 1: Additional Required Moments of HH

<p>When hands are soiled,</p> <p>Before and after touching others,</p> <p>After using the toilet,</p> <p>Before and after handling food and eating,</p> <p>After personal body functions, such as oral care,</p> <p>Before and after handling medications,</p> <p>After sneezing or coughing,</p> <p>After contact with body fluids,</p>	<p>At the beginning of the work day,</p> <p>Before preparing or serving food,</p> <p>After removing each individual piece of PPE, and before putting on new PPE,</p> <p>Before moving from a contaminated to a clean body site during the care of the same client,</p> <p>Before assisting clients with feeding or medications Immediately after removing gloves.</p>
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REDUCE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19. WASH YOUR HANDS.



COVID-19 Precautions: Wearing a Surgical Mask



Why?

Island Health policy indicates that all care providers and staff whose roles require direct contact with residents are to wear surgical/procedural masks when providing direct care to protect themselves, colleagues, residents and family.

Though we often wear masks around people who are symptomatic, there is growing recognition with COVID-19 that transmission can occur in those without symptoms (asymptomatic) or with mild symptoms (pre-symptomatic), and the ability to shed the virus is as high as those who have symptoms.

In a Long-term Care home in Washington, widespread testing during an outbreak revealed 56.5% of residents who tested positive, were asymptomatic. Of those residents, 77% went on to develop symptoms within 5 days.

In addition to protecting others, wearing a mask will reduce the risk for viral transmission. The [BC CDC health care worker exposure risk assessment tool](#) identifies those having not worn a mask as higher risk than those who were wearing a mask. This is particularly important, as we may not always be aware of those around us, whether that be residents or colleagues, who may be shedding the virus.

Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health

BC Health Care Worker Exposures Risk Assessment Tool

STEP 1:
Determine HCW PPE level

STEP 2:
Determine patient exposure scenario

STEP 3:
Determine risk level

STEP 4:
Implement recommended measures

Exposure Scenario		Exposure Risk	Recommendation
HCW PPE	PATIENT		
-	↔ 2m distance 🕒 Less than 15 mins	NO RISK	Not considered a close contact. If HCW asymptomatic, 1. CONTINUE to work, follow general precautions for all HCW 2. No further follow-up required by WHS
All appropriate PPE	● Wore mask ● NO mask		If HCW develops symptoms, 1. EXCLUDE from work + SELF-ISOLATE (until cleared for return to work) 2. NOTIFY supervisor/delegate 3. TEST – follow facility process to get tested or contact PWHCC
No gloves/gown (but wore mask + eye protection)	● Wore mask ● NO mask	LOW RISK	If HCW asymptomatic, 1. CONTINUE to work 2. SELF-MONITOR for symptoms for 14 days
No surgical mask/ No eye protection	● Wore mask		If HCW develops symptoms, 1. EXCLUDE from work + SELF-ISOLATE (until cleared for return to work) 2. NOTIFY supervisor/delegate 3. TEST – follow facility process to get tested or contact PWHCC
Perform AGMP + Wore surgical mask	-	HIGH RISK	If HCW asymptomatic and essential: 1. CONTINUE to work WITH PRECAUTIONS (wear mask at all times, practice physical distancing) 2. SELF-MONITOR for symptoms for 14 days
No PPE	● Wore mask ● NO mask		If HCW asymptomatic and non-essential: 1. EXCLUDE from work + SELF-ISOLATE for 14 days 2. NOTIFY supervisor/delegate 3. SELF-MONITOR for symptoms
No surgical mask/ No eye protection	● NO mask 💧 Active cough		If HCW develops symptoms, 1. EXCLUDE from work + SELF-ISOLATE (until cleared for return to work) 2. NOTIFY supervisor/delegate 3. TEST – follow facility process to get tested or contact PWHCC
Perform AGMP + No N95 respirator/ No eye protection	-		If HCW develops symptoms, 1. EXCLUDE from work + SELF-ISOLATE (until cleared for return to work) 2. NOTIFY supervisor/delegate 3. TEST – follow facility process to get tested or contact PWHCC

↔ HCW and patient were more than 2m apart during entire interaction
 🕒 Patient-provider interaction lasted less than 15 minutes (may be cumulative)
 ● Patient wore a mask during entire interaction
 ● Patient did NOT wear a mask
 💧 Patient had active cough or cough-inducing procedure performed (e.g. swabbing)

*Risk level may increase for not wearing gloves and gown if there was extensive body contact with the patient's body fluids.

Practice Physical Distancing



Though information regarding the virus is rapidly evolving, we know COVID-19 is transmitted via respiratory droplets in asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic and symptomatic residents. Physical distancing has been a key strategy utilized, worldwide, in breaking the chain of infection in COVID-19.

Practising physical distancing is important not only outside of work, but also in the work environment. Ensure you maintain a 2m distance from colleagues and residents, unless otherwise clinically indicated. According to the BC CDC, the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for care providers when you have kept interactions to <15 minutes while maintaining a 2 meter distance is “no risk”, even in the absence of PPE.

Here are some other tips to practice physical distancing while keeping up mental wellness:

- ✓ Greet with a wave instead of a handshake, kiss or hug
- ✓ Exercise at home or outside
- ✓ Get groceries and medicines at off-peak times
- ✓ Go for a walk with family or others you are living with
- ✓ Work from home
- ✓ Use food delivery services or online shopping
- ✓ Go outside for some fresh air
 - Go for a run, bike ride, rollerblade, snowshoe, walk the dog or get the mail while maintaining safe physical distance from others
- ✓ Use public transportation at off-peak times
- ✓ Have kids play in the backyard or park

Self-Care: Stay Home if Sick, However Mild the Symptoms

COVID-19 presents with a range of symptoms, which may be confused with other diseases and/or may go unrecognized. It is important for everyone to self-assess daily, prior to coming into work. Stay home if you have any of the following symptoms:

*Fever, Chills
Cough
Shortness of breath
Sore throat, Painful swallowing
Stuffy or runny nose
Loss of sense of smell*

*Headache
Muscle aches
Fatigue
Loss of appetite
Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea*

If you have any symptoms or are concerned about exposure, **do not come in to work** and ensure you call the Island health employee line at **1.844.901.8442** to review your symptoms and next actions including possible testing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has undoubtedly affected your lives, placing additional stressors upon you. Though you may have a number of creative strategies to address your self-care needs, we want to remind you employee resources and supports are available to you through [Employee Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#). In addition, the COVID-19 intranet page outlines numerous resources for supporting your wellbeing: [COVID-19 Resources for Staying Mentally & Emotionally Well](#).

References

1. BC CDC (2020). [Exposures and return to work for health care workers](#)
2. BC CDC (2020). [Health Care Professionals Exposure Risk Assessment Tool](#)
3. BC CDC (2020). [Infection Prevention and Control for Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Interim Guidance for Long-term Care and Seniors Assisted Living](#)
4. Bc CDC (2020). [Lab Testing](#)
5. BC CDC (2020). [Physical Distancing](#)
6. Gandhi, M., Yokoe, D.S. & Havlir, D.V. (2020). Asymptomatic transmission, the achilles' heel of current strategies to control covid-19. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, retrieved May 14, 2009 from <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMe2009758>
7. Kimball, A et al. (2020). Asymptomatic and presymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection in residents of a long-term care skilled nursing facility-King County, Washington, March 2020. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 68 (13), p.377-381