

Notice

Full Resumption of Research at Island Health

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To: Island Health Research Community

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In accordance with current Public Health Officer and Island Health institutional plans, the Research department will be supporting the full resumption of all research in alignment with [Step 3](#) of *BC's Restart* plan. This means the resumption of in-person research.

Institutional restart and safety plans are in place to be applied to Island Health learning, research and/or administrative spaces, until we shift to a more general communicable disease plan, as advised by the Public Health Officer and [Ministry of Health](#). The current plans will apply basic risk reduction principles that will reduce the risk of not only COVID19 transmission, but of all communicable diseases that affect the workplace. Those working in health authority clinical spaces (e.g. patient wards, ICU) must continue to follow health authority [IPAC guidelines](#).

Researchers will have to familiarize themselves with and adhere to, the safety plan of any department or facility they will be accessing in the course of the research study.

Our continued commitment to research that meets the highest standards of conduct, care, and ethics means the following principles remain in effect:

1. Permissions for research that require use of PPE may be limited unless there is access to or provisions for PPE, made within the research itself.
2. Researchers should consider equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and equal access in their planning for research resumption and should not compel students or employees to work on sites if those individuals have concerns about their safety or are experiencing other COVID-related barriers (refer to Island Health's most recent [HR FAQs](#)).

The Island Health Research Ethics Boards (REBs) have specific guidance for those who will be resuming, initiating or a part of studies (e.g. researchers, participants, etc.) that involve in-person research. Please find the guidance and forms [here](#).

Operational Review Considerations

Service and Program Capacity

Island Health has COVID-19 Recovery and Response procedures for its hospitals, surgical services, ambulatory care, emergency department, community health services, long-term care and mental health and substance use departments.

The desired outcomes of these procedures are:

- Normal levels of operation with an emphasis on keeping patient care limited to safe care spaces; and,
- Continued and diligent practices to limit the spread of COVID-19.

The resumption of research activities in a given department or facility, or research that requires specific clinical or diagnostic services, is dependent on:

1. Alignment of the study requirements with the area Recovery and Response plans, including safety considerations;
2. The scope and intensity of services required;
3. Capacity to support (staffing, procedures/services, equipment or supplies).

Research must mitigate to maximum extent possible the risk of COVID-19 transmission to staff, patients or families who are working in, or receiving services at Island Health facilities.

Safety Plans and Information:

These are available through the Island Health [intranet](#), and upon request via the departments.

COVID-19 Research Rules:

These requirements are framed around Step 3 of the BC Restart plan as of **July 7, 2021** and will extend until the start of Step 4, which is anticipated to begin **September 7, 2021** at the earliest.

- Daily health self-assessments: A [daily self-health assessment](#) is required before attending work or research on site.
- Stay home if you are sick: If you feel sick stay home, use the [Thrive Health](#) self-assessment tool for guidance. Follow the advice from [Public Health](#).
- Mandatory training where required;
- COVID-19 signage: Everyone must follow relevant signage when moving around Island Health sites.
- COVID-19 safety plans: All people on Island Health sites should be familiar with the relevant activity specific COVID-19 Safety Plan(s).

Non-medical masks: Non-medical masks are recommended in public indoor settings. Medical masks **must** be worn at hospital sites. Check for current requirements before attending the sites.

Return to sites – research support resources

Human Resources (HR) support

You can learn more about Island Health's HR policies and procedures through the webpages related to both HR and COVID-19 response at the health authority. Some of these links will only be available internally at Island Health.

Required Training

Island Health Research does not have specific training for researchers related to COVID-19. The completion of the resumption of research form and commitment statement indicates agreement to follow all applicable requirements at the health authority.

Research Resumption Process

Step 3 of BC's Restart plan for Offices and Workplaces allows for continued return to the workplace including attendance at seminars and larger meetings. The Research Department is expecting to gradually ramp up activities as of July 7 (when more restrictions are lifted including physical distancing). Public Health and WorkSafeBC will be providing more information on this soon to support employers and workers to make this important transition. As such, effective **July 30, 2021**, Island Health **Research Resumption approvals** are no longer required.

We would like to reiterate the vital importance of being fully vaccinated as we move towards a safe return to in-person research activity this fall. It is encouraging to see that in July 2021 the number of COVID-19 cases is manageable, and that the provincial government is continuing to ease restrictions under BC's Restart plan. Success depends on us all supporting the provincial immunization program. If you have not yet done so, we encourage you to register and book your vaccine. You can learn more at the [provincial immunization website](#).