



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Ministry of Health



ADVICE FOR SHOPS, STORES, AND MALLS

The focus in BC continues to be to contain the spread of COVID-19 in our communities and at a provincial level. The majority of people who become infected with COVID-19 will experience a mild illness that will not require medical care, but those who are vulnerable to the disease – those who are elderly or who have underlying conditions that compromise the immune system – are at risk for severe illness. To protect those most vulnerable, and to make sure that our health system is able to care for those who become severely ill, **we are asking people to self-monitor their health and to apply a low threshold when feeling unwell to stay home until they are better.**

There remains low risk for transmission at your place of business; we are encouraging people to engage in their usual activities, including shopping for food and other items, while they practice common sense approaches to prevent infection and transmission. These common sense approaches include hand washing, sneezing or coughing into your sleeve, avoiding touching your face, and practicing social distancing.

At an organizational level, consider increasing your routine cleaning practices – if you are cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces once a day, move to twice a day using the products you already use. Consider the density of your business and provide additional space for customers and employees to interact; for example, consider how line ups or seating could be expanded so that people are able to put some distance – 1 to 2 metres – between one another. Ensure your washrooms remain stocked with soap and consider offering hand sanitizer at entrances. Show your customers, clients, members, and employees what you are doing to support the efforts to slow transmission of this virus by communicating online and at your place of business. Support your employees to stay home if they are sick.

I have strongly recommended and advised that events that bring more than 250 people **closely together** – indoors or outdoors – be cancelled for now. This does not apply to buildings (including airports and schools) or transportation (including ferries and airplanes). This does not apply to grocery stores or shopping malls. This does not apply to museums, ski hills, gondolas, Science World, Butchart Gardens, or other places where the environment allows for distance between people. **You are encouraged to operate your business as usual with increased attention to common sense practices and measures to support social distancing.**

I have also recommended against non-essential travel outside of Canada, and that as of noon on March 13, 2020, those who do travel outside of Canada self-isolate at home for 14 days upon their return.

Other countries have adopted more restrictive containment approaches; this is not the path we are taking in BC. We expect that transmission of COVID-19 will increase in the province and are providing advice and recommendations in response to the situation as it evolves in an effort to slow transmission.

Please continue to monitor the BC Centre for Disease Control website on COVID-19 for updates, information, and resources on best practices: www.bccdc.ca/covid19.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bonnie Henry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bonnie Henry
MD, MPH, FRCPC
Provincial Health Officer