

Communicable disease prevention

A guide for employers

This guide is not meant for workplaces that are required to have an existing exposure control plan (ECP) related to communicable disease, such as health care employers. See [section 6.34](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation for more information about ECPs.

As COVID-19 vaccinations have become widely available to British Columbians, the overall risk of COVID-19 transmission and serious consequences has diminished. Despite this, the virus will still circulate like other communicable diseases.

This guide provides information for employers to develop a communicable disease plan. An effective plan includes ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease and additional measures for when there's an elevated risk of communicable disease.

Managing communicable disease at your workplace is part of an effective [occupational health and safety program](#).

Communicable disease prevention

A *communicable disease* is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another. Examples of communicable disease that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-19, norovirus, and seasonal influenza.

This guide describes a four-step process to help employers develop a communicable disease plan. This plan does not need to be written, posted, or approved by WorkSafeBC. Your plan may be supported by policies, signage, or other materials as appropriate to your workplace and the level of risk. Some employers may benefit from documenting their plan to assist in planning and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. A template is provided at the end of this guide for that purpose.

Step 1: Understand the risk

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable

disease transmission in your workplace. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health during periods of elevated risk.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases, including COVID-19, may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

- Monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by your regional medical health officer or the [provincial health officer](#) if it's related to your industry, region, or workplace. This includes orders, guidance, notices, and recommendations issued by a medical health officer or the provincial health officer.

Step 2: Implement measures, practices, and policies to reduce the risk

Ongoing measures — Maintain at all times

As an employer, you must implement and maintain the following measures at all times.

- Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g., fever or chills, coughing, diarrhea) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
- Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies (see [section 4.85](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to [wash their hands](#) regularly and to [cover coughs and sneezes](#).
- Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.
- Make sure building [ventilation](#) is adequate and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For more

information, see [section 4.72](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

- Support employees in receiving [vaccinations for COVID-19](#) and other vaccine-preventable conditions.

Additional measures — Implement as advised by Public Health

During a period of elevated risk, the medical health officer or provincial health officer will provide information and guidance about the risk and how you can reduce it. The measures that you'll need to implement will depend on the type of disease and the methods of transmission.

- Follow all direction from medical health officers and your regional health authority.
- Follow all orders, guidance, recommendations, and notices issued by the [provincial health officer](#) that are relevant to your industry, region, or workplace.
- Depending on the guidance that public health officials provide, you may need to assess the workplace to identify areas, activities, and processes that may pose a risk to workers. You may also need to implement appropriate control measures to reduce the risk, following the direction of Public Health. WorkSafeBC has maintained key [COVID-19 protocols](#) that you can refer to. You can use these as appropriate and as advised by Public Health during periods of increased risk.

Step 3: Communicate measures, practices, and policies

Make sure everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, receives information about your measures, practices, and policies for managing communicable disease. A template is provided at the end of this guide that employers may find useful for this purpose.

- Ensure all workers understand the measures in place at your workplace.
- Provide all your workers with information on policies for staying home when sick and working from home. The following resources are available for employers to support workers

working from home:

- [Working from home: A guide to keeping your workers healthy and safe](#)
- [Setting up, organizing, and working comfortably in your home workspace](#)

- Post signage in your workplace to support the measures you have in place.
- Make sure your supervisors are knowledgeable about your measures, practices, and policies, and incorporate these into supervision practices at the workplace.
- Provide information, signage, and materials to workers in a language they understand.
- Be mindful that some aspects of managing communicable disease in the workplace may raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek advice on these issues as necessary.

Step 4: Monitor your workplace and update your plan as necessary

Continuously evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.

- [Joint health and safety committees](#) and worker representatives play an important role in identifying and resolving workplace health and safety issues. When identifying and resolving safety issues, involve joint health and safety committees or worker health and safety representatives (or, in smaller workplaces, other workers).
- Use workplace inspections and ongoing supervision in the workplace to ensure measures are functioning properly, followed, and maintained.
- Monitor the guidance, notices, orders, and recommendations from Public Health (as required in Step 1). Adjust your plan as necessary.
- Monitor your workplace and risk level.
- Change your measures, practices, and policies as necessary.
- Update your plan to reflect changes in your workplace, including work processes, staff, and premises.
- Make sure workers know how to raise health and safety concerns

Communicable disease prevention planning template

The following template may be useful for employers in documenting and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. This is an optional resource, and may be used or adapted as suited to the individual employer.

Step 1: Understand the risk

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk for communicable disease transmission in the workplace.

All of our Board members are responsible for monitoring and reviewing communicable disease-related information issued by the regional medical health officer or the provincial health officer, and bring to the Board's attention whenever important information is released. Our Board has a monthly meeting where all Club related issues, including health related issues, are reviewed and discussed.

Information is communicated with the coaching team and Club members via email and/or through team meetings with the coaching staff.

It is expected that all public health advisories, guidance and requirements are strictly followed and adhered to in order to reduce risk of transmission. These expectations are shared through regular email updates.

Non-compliance is not tolerated, whereby the conduct of any coaching team member that is not in compliance with public health requirements is addressed through disciplinary measures, up to and including termination of employment/cessation of contract.

Conduct of skaters that is not in compliance with public health guidance is addressed and corrected immediately and, in the event they attend with symptoms of illness they are asked to leave the rink.

Step 2: Implement measures, practices, and policies to reduce the risk

Ongoing measures

Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of communicable disease so they can avoid being in the workplace when sick.

Our coaches are asked to do self screen every day before going to the rink to work. They are required to stay away from the rink if they are sick and/or if any of the following apply:

- Experiencing fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing;
- Experiencing chills, headache, fever, loss of appetite, extreme fatigue or tiredness, body aches, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell;
- A confirmed positive COVID-19 diagnosis;
- Travelled outside of Canada within the past 14 days and not exempt from quarantine;
- A close contact of someone with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis and required to self-isolate; and/or if directed for any reason by public health to self-isolate.

Skaters and parent volunteers are required to do the same daily self screen before coming to the rink and are required to stay away from the rink if any of the aforementioned applies. Coaches have the authority to remove a skater from the rink (i.e. send them home) if the skater has signs of illness. Regular updates are shared with Club members to ensure they continue to do the daily self screen and are aware of Club policy with respect to these expectations.

For the coaches who are paid a regular monthly director or coordinator salary there is no reduction in pay if they miss work due to communicable disease.

Provide hand-hygiene facilities and appropriate supplies (see section 4.85 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands and to cover coughs and sneezes.

The following resources may be of use to employers in communicating appropriate practices around the workplace:

- **Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Handwashing**
- **Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Cover coughs and sneezes**

The public city rinks that we rent are responsible for providing hand-hygiene facilities and appropriate supplies. We use regular email reminders to our members and coaching staff to always maintain good hand-hygiene practices like handwashing, sanitizing and covering coughs and sneezes with elbows (not hands).

Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.

The public city rinks are responsible for maintaining a clean environment through routine cleaning processes. For the classes for which we have COVID Captains, they are responsible for wiping down the common high touch areas like benches and boards after each session.

Make sure building ventilation is adequate and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For more information, see section 4.72 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

For employers without ventilation, or without direct control of their building's ventilation system, they may take other measures to improve air circulation, including opening windows.

Learn more here:

Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Ventilation and air circulation.

The public city rinks are responsible for providing an adequate and properly maintained ventilation system, and to ensure it functions as designed.

Additional measures

During a period of elevated risk, a medical health officer or the provincial health officer will provide information and guidance about the risk and how you can reduce it. The measures that you'll need to implement will depend on the type of disease and the methods of transmission.

We always follow the guidance provided by the following parties:

1. Medical health officer or provincial health officer
2. City rink policies
3. ViaSport policies
4. Skate Canada guidance
5. Section office policies

Step 3: Communicate measures, practices, and policies

Make sure everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, receives information about your measures, practices, and policies for managing communicable disease.

The Club ensures that all measures, practices, and policies are communicated through emails shared in a timely manner with Club members and the coaching team.

As we do not own any of the facilities that we use, these often include facility specific measures and requirements that are shared with specified user groups through the management team(s) of the facilities.

Step 4: Monitor your workplace and update your plan as necessary

Continually evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.

Our Board has a monthly meeting where all Club related issues, including health related issues, are reviewed and discussed. Whenever necessary, we evaluate and update all of our policies and plans during these monthly meetings. In the event that immediate changes need to be implemented between monthly meetings we communicate those via email.