



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

# The University of British Columbia Communicable Disease Prevention

2023





## INTENT

The intent of this document is to provide best-practices guidance to prevent the spread of **communicable diseases** at The University of British Columbia. This guide is not meant to replace existing communicable disease exposure control plans in workplaces that require them<sup>1</sup>. Instead, this guide provides general guidance on how Public Health, UBC and individuals work together to prevent the spread of communicable disease. It is intended to educate members of the campus community on such measures so that we all better understand the layers of protection.

Some of these measures are used on an ongoing basis (i.e. health checks, behaviours, cleaning, functioning HVAC systems) and some measures may be implemented when there is an elevated risk of communicable disease (i.e. barriers, physical distancing, wearing masks). For example, the level of risk may rise from time to time or on a seasonal basis and therefore the number of protective measures needed may rise, as recommended by Public Health. Visit [Safety & Risk Services \(Vancouver\)](#) and [Health, Safety & Environment \(Okanagan\)](#) webpages for the most up to date information.

Not all measures will be available all of the time, and therefore it is recommended that members of the UBC community understand and practice them in a risk-aware manner, guided by their comfort and Public Health Recommendations.

**A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a work, research or academic environment from one person to another (i.e. influenza, COVID-19, norovirus).**

## ROUTES OF TRANSMISSION

**Contact:** transfer of infectious agent from direct contact between people, or by indirect contact of a contaminated object (ie. Norovirus)

**Droplet:** transmitted by infectious droplets during coughing, sneezing and talking (ie. Influenza)

**Airborne:** infectious agents carried by dust or droplet nuclei that remain suspended in the air for long periods of time (ie. Tuberculosis)

**Common vehicle:** infectious agents that are transmitted by contaminated items such as food, water, and fomites (ie. Hepatitis A)

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION MEASURES



<sup>1</sup> See parts 5.2 and 6.33 to 6.40 of the BC OHSR. Such workers include the following: most health care workers, lab workers, emergency responders, firefighters and occupational first aid attendants in general industry. Other workers who feel that they are, or may be exposed to hazardous substances should review requirements with their supervisor. SRS and/or HSE can support such reviews to determine related requirements. For those workers who are at risk, UBC must perform a risk assessment and develop and implement a related exposure control plan and enroll workers in [Occupational and Preventative Health](#) (OPH) programs.



**DAILY  
HEALTH  
CHECKS**





**How are you feeling?**

- Sore throat
- Fever
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Chills
- Diarrhea
- Body aches
- Headache
- Nausea / vomiting
- Difficulty Breathing
- Confusion
- Other abnormal symptoms

Sick? Stay home.

**HEALTH CHECKS AND STAYING HOME**

Daily health checks are a great way to check in with your body and evaluate how you are feeling. A daily health check allows you to determine if you are exhibiting symptoms of communicable disease and may keep you from attending UBC campuses and spreading illness. In addition to reducing the potential to spread disease, staying home when sick gives you time to rest and recover more quickly. Review your Department’s [Remote Work Guidelines](#), and your UBC Employee Group’s [sick leave benefits](#) to understand your opportunities for working from home while symptomatic or taking sick leave.

Your daily health check should include answering: Am I experiencing any of the following new or worsening symptoms?

- sore throat
- fever
- fatigue
- cough
- chills
- difficulty breathing
- body aches
- headache
- nausea & vomiting
- diarrhea
- confusion
- other abnormal symptoms for you

Your ability to defend yourself from communicable disease is related to these interconnected states of wellness:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual
- Intellectual
- Environmental

By checking in with your states of wellness everyday, you may notice patterns in how you feel and begin to take corrective steps towards better health. Visit [UBC Wellbeing](#) for more information and resources on how to improve your wellbeing.

**UBC RESPONSE**

<p><b>General</b> UBC communications and signage re-iterate the importance of daily health checks</p>	<p><b>Elevated Risk</b> UBC will implement health checks in accordance with Public Health guidance and will enhance health check education.</p>
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### BEHAVIOURAL CONSIDERATIONS

The behaviours outlined in this section each offer a layer of protection against communicable diseases. Some behaviours are used routinely, such as handwashing and respiratory etiquette, while others may be added when communicable disease risk is elevated (wearing masks, distancing).

#### Handwashing

Washing your hands frequently and practicing good hand hygiene, such as avoiding touching your face, will reduce the chances of catching or spreading infections. Moments in your day to consider washing your hands include:

- before touching your eyes, nose, mouth or face
- after you have been in a public space or touched a surface frequently touched by other people
- after using the toilet
- after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- before and after preparing food
- before and after eating food
- before inserting or removing contact lenses
- after touching waste/garbage
- after handling shared objects

The best way to wash your hands is with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; however, when soap and water are not available alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used to disinfect your hands. Refer to the [BC Centre for Disease Control's guide](#) and the [UBC guide](#) on how to wash and sanitize hands.

#### Respiratory Etiquette

Respiratory etiquette can help prevent infection by limiting the transmission of respiratory pathogens spread by droplet or airborne routes. An example of good respiratory etiquette is to cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands, or cover your mouth and nose with a tissue.

#### UBC RESPONSE

##### General


UBC communications and signage re-iterate the importance of hand washing and respiratory etiquette.

##### Elevated Risk


UBC will enhance education around additional behaviours, such as masks and physical distancing, in accordance with Public Health recommendations



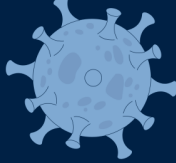
**VACCINES**




**Getting Vaccinated**  
*Stay up-to-date on routine vaccinations*



Influenza



COVID-19



Pertussis

## VACCINATIONS

Vaccines have proven to greatly reduce, and even eliminate, many infectious diseases that once killed or harmed people. Vaccines lower your chance of catching certain diseases, and/or experiencing a serious outcome from disease. Vaccines also lower your chance of spreading disease, which protects people in the community who are unable to be vaccinated. Being sure you are up-to-date on your routine vaccinations, getting annual flu shots and being fully vaccinated against COVID-19, are ways to protect yourself and others from preventable infections. A list of vaccines recommended for all adults is provided by [Immunize BC](#).

## UBC RESPONSE

### General

UBC works with the Provincial Health Authorities to offer immunization clinics to members of the campus community ([Vancouver](#), [Okanagan](#)).

### Elevated Risk

UBC will enhance education around the benefits of vaccines and will work with the Provincial Health Authorities to increase access to vaccinations to the extent possible.



**IMMEDIATE  
WORK  
ENVIRONMENT**



Preventing spread of illness in immediate work environment



Frequent Cleaning

- in classrooms
- in washrooms
- in common areas

### IMMEDIATE WORK ENVIRONMENT

#### Cleaning

Cleaning of shared areas, objects, and work stations, is important in preventing the spread of communicable diseases. Custodial services ([Vancouver](#), [Okanagan](#)) provide frequent cleaning of classrooms, washrooms, common areas, and high touch points.

If you choose to use your own cleaning products, please remember that UBC is a scent sensitive environment ([Vancouver](#), [Okanagan](#)). As such, please refrain from bringing in scented cleaning supplies as it can have unintended health effects on others.

Hand sanitizing stations are maintained on a regular basis to ensure that supply is abundant. Contact UBC Facilities ([Vancouver](#), [Okanagan](#)) for more information, supplies, or cleaning requests.

### UBC RESPONSE

#### General


Custodial services follow industry cleaning standards [ISSA Canada](#) and [APPA Leadership in Educational Facilities](#).

#### Elevated Risk


Enhanced cleaning of high touch surfaces, supplying self-serve cleaning and sanitizing stations and installing barriers at customer service locations as recommended by Public Health.




HVAC  
SYSTEMS




Functioning HVAC systems



- Ensuring appropriate filtration



- Introducing fresh air as appropriate



- Maintaining and verifying HVAC systems

### HVAC SYSTEMS

Building ventilation systems can help in reducing the transmission of some communicable diseases, such as the influenza and COVID-19. Building ventilation can be improved through measures such as enhanced filtration, introduction of fresh air and system verification and maintenance. For more information about campus ventilation please visit [Building Operations \(Vancouver\)](#), or [Facilities Management \(Okanagan\)](#).

### UBC RESPONSE


#### General

Follow the standards from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers.


#### Elevated Risk

Introduce fresh air, increase frequency of system verification or make other adjustments as recommended by Public Health.


GETTING  
OUTSIDE




Benefits of being outside



- Breeze disperses and dilutes infectious particles



- Improved mood
- Reduced stress



- Strengthened immunity

### GETTING OUTSIDE

Respiratory illness is more easily spread between people who are in close contact as respiratory droplets or aerosols can move between people more efficiently. Getting outside offers the ability to spread out, while the breeze can disperse and dilute infectious particles. Research shows that people who spend more time outdoors reap health benefits such as relieving stress, strengthening immunity and improving mood.

From park benches, picnic tables, bistros and grassy patches, UBC offers a multitude of places to gather, or spend in solitude, outside.

### UBC RESPONSE

#### General

Provide outdoor space that supports members of the campus community to spend time outdoors.

#### Elevated Risk

Enhance and promote opportunities to get outside.



## RESPECTING CHOICES

UBC has diverse and unique campuses, hosting many people, all with different needs and desires. Each individual will consider their own health, their family's health and will have their own level of comfort with the risk of contracting a communicable disease. Some individuals may choose to wear a mask and some may not; others may ask that you provide them space, while others may want to be in closer proximity; some may choose to remain unvaccinated. Please be respectful of these personal choices.

Conversations surrounding personal choices can be difficult to navigate. Below are some resources to explore ways to have respectful conversations about decisions that may be different from your own.

- [Conflict Engagement: An Introduction](#) (Independent, online)
- [How to Talk about Vaccines \(WHO\)](#) (Document)

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

This communicable disease prevention plan will be posted on [Safety & Risk Services \(Vancouver\)](#) and [Health, Safety & Environment \(Okanagan\)](#) webpages. Infographics will be included in communication to the campus community through a variety of channels (email, website, social media). Communicable disease prevention signage will be placed around campus as necessary.

## MONITORING AND ADJUSTMENT

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees ([Vancouver](#), [Okanagan](#)) will review this document. UBC will continually monitor and review communicable disease-related information provided by Public Health as it relates to UBC campuses.

If members of the UBC community have questions about the UBC Communicable Disease Prevention Plan they are encouraged to contact [Safety and Risk Services \(Vancouver\)](#), [Health, Safety and Environment \(Okanagan\)](#) or a member of their Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees ([Vancouver](#), [Okanagan](#)).

*Created June 2021*

*Updated May 2023*