



Guidance for BC's Hotel Sector to Prevent COVID-19 Transmission

July 9, 2020

Introduction

This document provides hotel operators with guidance so that they can prevent and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission on their premises.

As plans for reopening continue, several key public health assumptions should inform safe hotel operation:

- COVID-19 is now an established human pathogen which is likely to circulate in the population for several years.
- Although intense vaccine development efforts continue, we do not know if or when a COVID-19 vaccine will be widely available.
- There will likely be periods of increased COVID-19 transmission in communities in British Columbia.
- These periods are likely to affect different communities in British Columbia at different times.

As guidance and regulations are updated to respond to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic in BC, operators are strongly advised to regularly review public health recommendations, [Provincial Health Officer Orders](#), and [WorkSafeBC protocols](#) within which hotels are expected to operate. This includes advice on operating common components of hotels, including restaurants, recreational facilities, spas, and meeting spaces.

Posters and other printable resources are available on the [BCCDC website](#).

Basic Measures to Prevent COVID-19 Transmission in Hotels

All businesses are required by Order of the Provincial Health Officer to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan through WorkSafeBC. It is recommended that operators focus on the following measures:

- Encouraging staff to stay home and guests to self-isolate if they are ill;
- Providing space to allow people to maintain physical distance;
- Practicing routine cleaning and disinfection; and
- Ensuring staff and guests have easy access to handwashing stations or hand sanitizing supplies.

Supporting Guests in Self-Isolation

People returning to British Columbia from other jurisdictions outside of Canada are required by law to self-isolate for 14 days and complete a self-isolation plan. For some people, self-isolation will involve staying at a hotel.

Hotels can take the following measures to limit the risk of transmission for those in self-isolation and those who they may come into contact with:



- Advise guests in self-isolation not to use any common hotel areas, equipment, or appliances, including ice and vending machines. Close ice and vending machines if required.
- Support self-isolated guests who may need food delivered. If on-site food service is not offered, provide information on local grocery stores and restaurants offering delivery. If food service and food delivery options are not available, asymptomatic guests in self-isolation can leave to obtain groceries.
- Support self-isolated guests who need to get prescriptions and medications by providing information on local pharmacies offering delivery services. If pharmacy delivery is not available, asymptomatic guests in self-isolation can leave to obtain prescriptions and medications. Asymptomatic self-isolated guests can also leave the hotel to attend critical appointments.

Guests and Staff Who Become Ill

It is important that anyone who feels sick stays home and away from others. Hotel operators are strongly encouraged to adopt supportive sick leave policies that allow staff to stay home when experiencing any symptoms and until symptoms resolve.

If a staff member or guest develops any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), immediately isolate that person from others and encourage the use of the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) or call 8-1-1 to determine if testing is warranted. If testing is recommended, arrange transportation for the guest or staff member to visit the nearest testing facility and report the incident to the local public health office. Encourage guests who self-isolate in a hotel room to arrange for food delivery and advise against using common hotel areas until they are feeling better.

At this time, only people with symptoms of COVID-19 or people who are referred to testing by a health care professional should be tested for COVID-19. Staff and guests should be assessed for symptoms of COVID-19 when they arrive at the hotel. Temperature checking can be performed, but should not be relied upon as sufficient as not all people who have COVID-19 experience a fever. Routine asymptomatic testing of employees or staff is not recommended in BC.

Physical Distancing Between Staff and Guests

Ensuring that adequate physical distancing can be maintained between staff and guests throughout the workspace is essential to reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19. A safe physical distance of at least 2 metres between staff and guests should be maintained as much as possible. Establish and post occupancy limits for common areas such as elevators, cleaning supply closets, staff break rooms, and laundry rooms to ensure that physical distances can be maintained. Reconfigure public seating areas, where necessary, to promote physical distancing.

The configuration of some workplaces will not allow for physical distancing to be maintained – for example, at some reception and concierge desks where the width of the desk will not ensure adequate distance. In these cases, consider other ways of maintaining distance, such as putting tape on the floor to indicate where guests should stand, or install a physical barrier to reduce the risk of transmission. Additionally, wearing a non-medical face mask can help reduce the risk of transmission in these settings. For information on the use of non-medical masks, please visit the [WorkSafeBC website](#) or the [BCCDC website on face masks](#).



Keep small groups of staff members who frequently work together as a cohort and schedule their shifts together as much as possible. In break rooms and lunch areas, staff should be supported to maintain safe physical distance from other staff members outside of their cohort. If staff common rooms are small and do not allow for physical distancing, consider repurposing unused spaces such as banquet rooms. Where distancing is not possible, consider installing physical barriers.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Hotels should train staff on cleaning and disinfection practices in accordance with existing requirements regarding laundry, housekeeping, and food safety regulations. Cleaning refers to the removal of visible dirt, grime, and impurities. Cleaning does not kill germs, but helps remove them from the surface. Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces have been cleaned.

General hotel guidance includes, but is not limited to:

- Using a disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number and a viricidal claim. Be sure to follow instructions on the label to disinfect effectively, including precautions to protect staff using these products;
- Increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-traffic areas and high-use items, such as door knobs and handles, menus, handrails, elevator buttons, light switches, PIN pads, washrooms, and counters;
- Cleaning all dishware and kitchen equipment in the suite daily and between guests; and
- Considering removing in-room binders and replace with a single sheet summary that can be disposed between guests, or provide the information on a website that can be accessed via mobile devices.

For additional guidance, please see BCCDC's [Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings](#) guidance document.

Hand Hygiene

Maintaining good hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to prevent infection and to protect others. Good hand hygiene involves frequent hand washing using soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available. It is important to not touch your face, eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands. Additional measures to promote good hand hygiene practices throughout the workspace include:

- Avoid sharing equipment, such as pens, radios, computers, walkie-talkies, and cell phones. If equipment is shared, disinfect after each use.
- Place hand sanitizer dispensers (touchless, where possible) at entrances and high contact areas, including lobby reception areas, other hotel lobby areas, restaurant entrances, meeting spaces, elevators, valet and vehicle loading and offloading areas, and other public areas.
- Display signs encouraging hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and physical distancing for staff and guests, particularly in high-traffic areas, including the front lobby, reception areas, as well in back of house areas.

Check-In/Check-Out Procedures

Staff and guests are often required to interact in close proximity when checking in and checking out. To reduce the risk of transmission at reception, consider using every other workstation, or separating workstations so they are 2 metres apart to ensure separation between front desk agents. Installing physical barriers at the reception can also reduce transmission between front desk agents and guests.



Housekeeping and Laundry

Normal precautions and practices for cleaning guest rooms and laundering used linens and towels apply. Cleaning of guest rooms should be done when guests are not in the room as much as possible, and if guests have symptoms of COVID-19, consider leaving clean towels and linens outside of guest rooms (and communicating with guests about this change in procedure). Complete a thorough cleaning and disinfection of all hard surfaces. Special attention should be given to frequently touched items such as toilets, sinks, faucets, doorknobs, light switches, telephones, remote controls, bar fridges, and garbage cans.

Food and Beverage Services

Follow the protocols and guidance for routine practices as set out in the *Food Safety Act* and the Food Premises Regulation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, pay particular attention to mass gathering restrictions and occupancy limits and recommendations for restaurant settings. Additional guidance for food safety is provided on the [BCCDC website](#).

Engineering and Maintenance

Do not perform any non-urgent room maintenance until a room is no longer occupied and has been cleaned thoroughly. If room maintenance is necessary when a room is occupied, practice proper hygiene and physical distancing to ensure the safety of workers and guests. Clean and disinfect all shared tools and equipment after each shift or when tools are transferred between workers.

Spas and Salons, Pools, Fitness Centres, and Playgrounds

Refer to the BCCDC website for guidance specific to [playgrounds](#) and [recreational facilities](#). Review the guidance on WorkSafeBC related to [personal services](#). Check the [BCCDC website](#) for updates related to guidance around swimming pools.

Transportation

When providing transportation services, it can be difficult to adhere to physical distancing recommendations. Employers should assess the number of people being transported or sharing vehicles and employ measures to ensure that at least 2 metres of distance between people is maintained. Measures that may be taken to ensure at least 2 metres of distance include the following:

- Seat passengers in such a way that a physical distance of 2 metres is maintained wherever possible. For example, seat passengers in the back row on the side opposite of the driver wherever possible.
- Stagger passengers to allow for fewer vehicle occupants at a time and adjust the number of passengers per trip
- If possible, use larger vehicles or multiple vehicles
- Wearing a non-medical mask can help reduce the risk of transmission in these settings. For information on the use of non-medical masks, please visit the [WorkSafeBC website](#) or the [BCCDC website on face masks](#).

Employers must also implement a process that allows for physical distancing between workers and guests when loading and unloading vehicles.



Employers should ensure that high contact surfaces within vehicles (including courtesy vehicles) are routinely cleaned and disinfected. These include seatbelts, door handles, steering wheels, and hand holds. At the end of each shift, vehicles should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

These protocols apply to all types of transportation, including buses, shuttles, small planes, helicopters, and boats.

Events and Gatherings

Hotels are required by law to adhere to the Provincial Health Officer's prohibition on mass gatherings of 50 or more people. For any event or gathering, consider having registration and door attendants monitor capacities and advise when maximum numbers are reached.

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