



## Children, youth and families during COVID-19

Last updated: May 16, 2024

### Schools

Masks are not required for K-12 staff, students or visitors in schools. Wearing a mask past the recommendation of public health is a personal choice, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to continue wearing a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The decision to wear a mask in school settings should be respected.

For more information, visit:

- [BCCDC: Child Care & Schools](#)
- [BCCDC: School COVID-19 Information](#)
- [Province of British Columbia: Communicable Disease Prevention in K-12 Schools](#)
- [Government of British Columbia: K-12 daily health check](#)
- [BCCDC: Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance K-12 Schools](#)

### School exposures

With schools in session, you may be concerned about exposure to COVID-19. For information about school exposures from your local health authority, visit:

- [Fraser Health: School outbreaks](#)
- [Island Health: COVID-19 Health Protection Schools FAQ](#)
- [Northern Health: School and youth health](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health: COVID-19](#)

You and your child may wonder how the COVID-19 test is given. To help reduce anxiety and worry for children who must take the test, BC Children's Hospital developed an informative video. You can watch as a Child Life Specialist shows how the test works and how children will feel when receiving it. Visit the [PHSA: COVID-19 test video for children to watch](#).

Testing for COVID-19 is recommended for anyone with cold, influenza or COVID-like symptoms, even mild symptoms. Testing is not required if you do not have symptoms. You do not need a referral or to call **8-1-1**. Visit [BCCDC: COVID-19 and Children](#) to learn more.

### Maternal and infant health

#### Pregnancy

Pregnancy does not increase the risk of getting COVID-19 but could cause an increased risk for severe outcomes of COVID-19. Pregnant women should follow the same self-isolation guidelines as everyone in the community. If you become ill during your pregnancy, you should speak with your health care provider about testing and treatment for COVID-19.

Evidence shows that mRNA COVID-19 vaccines have no safety concerns during pregnancy or breastfeeding. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that people who are planning a pregnancy, pregnant or breastfeeding get a:

- Complete series with an mRNA vaccine
- Booster dose when eligible

There's no evidence that any vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines, cause fertility problems.

Visit [Government of Canada: COVID-19: Pregnancy, childbirth and caring for a newborn](#) to learn more.

### **Infant Feeding**

Breastfeeding helps protect your baby from getting sick. Continue to breastfeed and hold your baby skin-to-skin often. Washing your hands often can help keep your baby from getting sick. To be extra safe, wear a mask when breastfeeding if you are feeling unwell. If you are using a breast pump, wash all parts of your pump and feeding equipment each time. If you use formula, make sure you have a two-week supply on hand.

To learn more about infant feeding during COVID-19, visit:

- [BCCDC: Babies](#)
- [BCCDC: Breastfeeding and COVID-19](#)
- [Perinatal Services BC: COVID-19 and Breastfeeding Frequently Asked Questions](#)  
[Perinatal Services BC: COVID-19 and Infant Formula Feeding Frequently Asked Questions](#)

### **Positive parenting when your child stays home when sick**

Children and youth may need extra support to cope with being away from friends and not being able to participate in their usual activities. Learn about how we can talk to children and youth:

- [Canadian Paediatric Society's Caring for Kids: Helping children and teens cope with stressful public events](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society: How can we talk to kids about COVID-19? Be "realistically reassuring"](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society: Parenting during COVID-19: A new frontier](#)

### **Resources for adolescents and their parents**

Learn about how you can support your teen;

- [Canadian Paediatric Society: COVID, youth, and substance use: Critical messages for youth and families](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society: Tips and tricks to help adolescents cope during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Kids Help Phone: We're here for you during COVID-19](#)

### **Promoting mental health for children and youth**

Physical distancing requirements and isolation can affect mental health for children and youth. Find resources for supporting children.

- [Canadian Paediatric Society: How to help youth tackle the blues during COVID-19 and #physicaldistancing](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society: Supporting youth with anxiety disorders during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Anxiety Canada: The CARD™ Toolkit for Educators, Parents, and Healthcare Professionals](#)
- [HealthLink BC: Mental Health and COVID-19](#)

### **COVID-19 in Children**

Children generally have milder symptoms of COVID-19 than adults. For information on the effect of COVID-19 on children and how to keep them safe, visit [BC Centre for Disease Control: COVID-19 and Children](#).

## Rashes and inflammatory reactions

Children have also been reported to experience rashes or skin lesions or an inflammatory response several weeks after infection with COVID-19. "COVID toes," also known as chilblain-like lesions, are one of several skin lesions seen with COVID-19. These skin lesions seem to be a specific rash. They are usually seen in children or young adults and not associated with severe disease.

## Multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C)

[Multisystem inflammatory syndrome](#) in children (MIS-C) is a newly recognized clinical syndrome in children and adolescents. MIS-C appears to be caused by an exaggerated immune response, leading to severe widespread inflammation. Different parts of the body can become inflamed, including the heart, gastrointestinal system, lungs, kidneys, brain, skin, eyes and lymph nodes. It can be serious and even deadly, but most children get better with medical care.

## Children with Special Health Needs

You may have additional concerns if your children have special health needs.

- [Autism Speaks: COVID-19: Tips and resources for autistic people and families](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Children with immune compromise](#)
- [BC Children's Hospital Asthma Program: Inhaler dose tracking sheet](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society: Paediatric asthma and COVID-19](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society: Type 1 diabetes and COVID-19: Going back to school](#)
- [Canadian Paediatric Society: When your child has ADHD: Coping during a Pandemic](#)

The information provided above has been adapted from the [BC Centre for Disease Control: Testing for COVID-19](#) page, [BC Centre for Disease Control: COVID-19 illness in children](#), [BC Centre for Disease Control: Babies](#) page, [BC Centre for Disease Control: School COVID-19 information](#) and the [BC Centre for Disease Control: Types of tests](#) page accessed May 2024.