

## 20.0 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION PLAN

WCCMT's Health and Safety Sub Committee monitors the risk of communicable disease for our college, in conjunction with local public health authorities. WCCMT has established this Communicable Disease Prevention Plan to monitor all relevant information for our college, oversee our response plan and to provide updates to students, faculty and staff as these become available.

### The members of the WCCMT Health and Safety Sub Committee are:

- Nicole Freesman, Executive Director & SEA
- Sharlene Reis, Director of Compliance
- Maria Clemente, Director of Operations
- Amy VanSickle, Curriculum Coordinator
- Keith Bootsma, Practical Education Advisor
- Debbie Lizee, Clinic Administrator: Scheduling & Logistics
- Cecile Pama, Clinic Administrator: Internal & External Relations
- Lisa Fletcher, Clinic Manager, Victoria Campus
- Kadauna Wilkes, Campus Director, Victoria Campus
- Samantha Maegard, Admissions & Operations Coordinator, Victoria Campus

### What is WCCMT doing to prepare for a pandemic or outbreak?

WCCMT's Health and Safety Sub Committee has considered the impact an outbreak or pandemic might have on WCCMT. Since the emergence of H1N1 in 2009 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Health and Safety Sub Committee has met on several different occasions to:

- Review and revise our infection prevention and control plans
- Implement infection prevention and control measures based on current recommendations by the public health authorities, including:
  - Providing and installing signs for recommended hand washing techniques and proper mask use in WCCMT washrooms and around campus
  - Providing and installing hand sanitizing stations at key public areas and in all classrooms
  - Providing and installing Plexiglass barriers at the reception desk
  - Investing in the audio-visual technology required to support remote class attendance
- Prepare for potentially high levels of absenteeism
- Support program continuity planning

### Understanding the Risk

The Chair of the Health & Safety Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing communicable disease-related information issued by the regional medical health officer and/or the provincial health officer. Sources with information relevant to the WCCMT community include:

Fraser Health Authority	<a href="https://www.fraserhealth.ca/">https://www.fraserhealth.ca/</a>
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Vancouver Coastal Health Authority	<a href="https://www.vch.ca">https://www.vch.ca</a>
Vancouver Island Health Authority	<a href="https://www.islandhealth.ca">https://www.islandhealth.ca</a>
The British Columbia Centre for Disease Control	<a href="https://www.bccdc.ca">BC Centre for Disease Control (bccdc.ca)</a>
Public Health Agency of Canada	<a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html</a>
British Columbia’s Ministry of Health	<a href="https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/health">https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/health</a>
British Columbia’s Ministry of Advanced Education & Skills Training (for information relevant to private post-secondary institutions)	<a href="https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/advanced-education-skills-training">https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/advanced-education-skills-training</a>
College of Massage Therapists of British Columbia	<a href="https://www.cmtbc.ca/">https://www.cmtbc.ca/</a>

Information from these sources will be monitored and reviewed as needed, and during times of elevated risk for communicable disease transmission including cold and flu season in the fall and winter months, and in the event of an outbreak at the College or in the region.

**Reducing the Risk**

The College has established policies to support infection prevention and control on campus, and to support students, faculty and staff who have symptoms of communicable disease so they can avoid being on campus when sick. In general, any student, faculty or staff who has symptoms of communicable disease should avoid coming to campus while ill.

Students are allowed up to 20% absence from a course in cases of illness or emergency. Students may be allowed to attend remotely with the provision of a doctor’s note or confirmed diagnosis of communicable disease. Additionally, fees for exams/quizzes missed due to illness with a communicable disease will be waived, upon provision of valid documentation attesting to the illness. Students are advised to consult with the Student Services Coordinator in New West and with Student Services and the Campus Director in Victoria as soon as possible in the event of prolonged illness or absence.

Faculty & staff who are experiencing symptoms of cold or flu should send notice to their supervisor as soon as practicable to report their illness. If practicable as determined by the relevant supervisor, the option to work from home may be available. In instances of short-notice (less than 24hrs notice) absences due to illness, paid sick leave for those eligible will apply.

All students, faculty and staff are encouraged to follow precautionary measures including: Immunization; daily self-monitoring for symptoms; staying home when sick; wearing masks when recommended by public health; and good hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Individuals with symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested immediately.

Ongoing risk reduction measures in place include the provision of hand washing and hand sanitizing stations in all classrooms and throughout the campus with relevant signage; regular janitorial service with frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces; regular maintenance and optimization of the building ventilation system; free on-site flu clinics each year at the New Westminster campus.

In circumstances of elevated risk, additional measures may be implemented. For example, increased use of personal protective equipment and/or social distancing measures such as reduced seating in common areas, staggered lunch breaks, grouping students into cohorts etc., depending on level of risk and guidance from local health authorities.

It is to be noted that the College's public clinic is identified as an area of elevated risk, given the high number of members of the public accessing the clinic on a daily basis and the close contact between student interns and their patients. It may be necessary at times to implement additional infection prevention and control measures in the public clinic beyond those that apply to the other areas of the campus.

### **Communication of Infection Prevention Policies & Procedures**

Information on the College's infection prevention policies and procedures can be found in the WCCMT Health & Safety Manual. The Health & Safety Manual is provided to all incoming students, faculty and staff electronically, and hard copies are available in the student services office and in the faculty lounge. Further information is also included in the Student Clinic Handbook and the Clinic Instructor's Manual. Students will receive further training during their Term 2 Clinic Orientation.

During times of elevated risk, relevant updates will be sent out via e-mail to all stakeholders and notices may be posted on the bulletin boards and digital displays on campus. Information about mandatory measures is posted at all entrances to the building.

*The following information on communicable disease prevention is collected from WorkSafe BC online resource. For more information visit <https://www.worksafebc.com/>*

### **What is Communicable Disease?**

- A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from person to person. Examples of communicable diseases that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-19, norovirus, and seasonal influenza.
- Communicable disease prevention focuses on basic risk reduction principles to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. The fundamental components of communicable disease prevention include both ongoing measures to maintain at all times and additional measures to be implemented as advised by Public Health:
  - Ongoing measures — maintain at all times:
    - Implementing policies to support individuals who have symptoms of a communicable disease (for example, fever and/or chills, recent onset of coughing, diarrhea), so they can avoid being on site when sick
    - Promoting hand hygiene by providing hand hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies and reminding everyone through policies and signage to [wash their hands regularly](#) and to use [appropriate hygiene practices](#)

- Maintaining a [clean environment](#) through routine cleaning processes
- Ensuring building [ventilation](#) is properly maintained and functioning as designed
- Supporting students, faculty and staff in receiving vaccinations for vaccine-preventable conditions to the extent that we are able
- Additional measures — implemented as advised by Public Health:
  - Being prepared to implement additional prevention measures as required by a medical health officer or the provincial health officer to deal with communicable diseases in the College or region, should those be necessary.

### **What are the responsibilities of all students, staff and faculty?**

All members of WCCMT are asked to:

- Follow recommendations provided by the health authorities and WCCMT to help stop the spread of infection. Local health authorities include the Provincial Health Officer; the BCCDC, Fraser Health and Vancouver Coastal Health.
- Stay at home if you are sick. Remain at home until at least 24 hours after you are free of fever (100° F [37.8°C]) without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Advise the Clinic Administration, if you are staying home due to a possible illness. Information relating to any individual's medical status is to remain confidential and kept to a need-to-know basis.
- Develop strategies for college and program continuity in anticipation of high absenteeism.
- Have a personal preparedness plan should you or a family member become ill.

Note that WCCMT requires a medical certificate for illness absences unless the student, faculty or staff member has met with the Clinic Administration, and they have advised that individual to go home based on their professional assessment of the symptoms that the individual has communicated to them.

#### **Student Responsibilities:**

- Consult with the Clinic Administration if you are ill
- Advise Student Services if you are ill or suspect you may have the flu or other illness.
- Remain away from class and WCCMT until you are well enough to return (see paragraph above).

#### **Clinic Staff Responsibilities:**

- Consult with the Clinic Administration.
- Remain flexible in your job function and responsibilities.
- Advise your department head if you are experiencing or are caring for someone who is ill.

**Faculty:**

- Support students who require special accommodation due to illness, including offering options for completing course requirements.
- Provide information to students on where they can obtain resources and support.
- Advise Student Services and department heads of any illness-related absenteeism.
- Consider ways in which you can offer course material, including assignments and exams, in alternate formats, in the event that students are not able to participate in or attend classes.
- If you believe you may have contracted a communicable disease, consult with your department head.

**Department Heads:**

- Assist WCCMT by promoting infection control practices recommended by WCCMT to your staff.
- Support your staff and provide accommodation to those who are absent due to illness or acting as a caregiver for an ill family member.
- Monitor, track and report all illness-related absenteeism to the Student Services Coordinator.
- Develop or review your department's continuity plans by identifying critical functions, resources and determining minimum staffing levels to maintain operations.
- Consider training additional staff to perform key functions should there be high absenteeism in your department.
- Alert the College's Health & Safety Officers to any health and safety concerns in your department immediately.

**What is influenza?**

Influenza, often called the flu, is an infection of the upper airway caused by an influenza virus.

Getting sick with influenza also puts you at risk of other infections. These include viral or bacterial pneumonia which affect the lungs. The risk of complications, which can be life-threatening, is greater for seniors 65 years and older, very young children, and people who have lung or heart diseases, certain chronic health conditions, or weakened immune systems.

Healthy pregnant women in the second half of their pregnancy are at greater risk of being hospitalized following infection with influenza virus.

In Canada, thousands of people are hospitalized and may die from influenza and its complications during years with widespread or epidemic influenza activity.

**How can influenza be prevented?**

You can reduce the risk of getting influenza or spreading it to others by:

- washing your hands regularly;
- promptly disposing of used tissues in the waste basket or garbage;
- coughing and sneezing into your shirt sleeve rather than your hands;
- staying home when you are ill; and
- getting an influenza vaccine.

Getting an influenza vaccine can help prevent you from getting sick with influenza and from spreading it to others.

### **How does influenza spread?**

Influenza spreads easily from person to person through coughing, sneezing, or having face-to-face contact.

The virus can also spread when a person touches tiny droplets from a cough or a sneeze on another person or object and then touches their own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

An infected person can spread the influenza virus even before feeling sick. An adult can spread the virus from about 1 day before to 5 days after symptoms start. Young children may be able to spread the virus for a longer period of time.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Influenza symptoms can include fever, headache, muscle pain, runny nose, sore throat, extreme tiredness, and cough. Children may also experience nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Although infections from other viruses may have similar symptoms, those due to the influenza virus tend to be worse.

Symptoms can begin about 1 to 4 days, or an average of 2 days, after a person is first exposed to the influenza virus. Fever and other symptoms can usually last up to 7 to 10 days, but the cough and weakness may last 1 to 2 weeks longer.

### **What is the home treatment?**

If you get sick with influenza, home treatment can help ease symptoms. Follow the self-care advice below:

- Get plenty of rest.
- Drink extra fluids to replace those lost from fever.
- Avoid smoking and ask others not to smoke in the house.
- Breathe moist air from a hot shower or from a sink filled with hot water to help clear a stuffy nose.
- Anti-influenza drugs or antivirals are available by prescription, but these must be started within 48 hours of the start of your symptoms to work best. These will shorten symptoms by about 3 days if given within 12 hours and by about 1.5 days if given within 2 days of the start of symptoms.
- Non-prescription cough and cold medications are available for relief of influenza symptoms but these are not recommended for children less than 6 years of age.

- Acetaminophen or Tylenol® can be given for fever or soreness. ASA or Aspirin® should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye Syndrome. For more information on Reye Syndrome, see [HealthLinkBC File #84 Reye Syndrome](#).

### **When should I see a health care provider?**

Consult your health care provider early if you develop flu-like symptoms and you have a condition that puts you at higher risk of complications.

You should also call your health care provider if your symptoms get worse, such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chest pain, or signs of dehydration (such as dizziness when standing or low urine output).

### ***What is COVID-19?***

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It emerged in December of 2019, and went on to cause a worldwide pandemic. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The coronavirus can pass from person to person and is spread through droplets and virus particles released into the air when an infected person breathes, talks, laughs, sings, coughs or sneezes.

Getting immunized, staying home when sick, visiting others outdoors or in small groups, wearing masks in indoor public spaces, increasing ventilation, and cleaning your hands are all important measures that will reduce transmission.

### ***Symptoms of COVID-19***

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses including the flu and common cold. COVID-19 symptoms can range from mild to severe. Sometimes people with COVID-19 have mild illness, but their symptoms may suddenly worsen in a few days. Research shows that some symptoms are more likely related to COVID-19 than others.

#### ***Key symptoms of COVID-19 include:***

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Difficulty breathing

#### ***Other symptoms may include:***

- Sore throat
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

**Go to an urgent care clinic or emergency department if you:**

- find it hard to breathe
- have chest pain
- can't drink anything
- feel very sick
- feel confused

**What to do if you have symptoms that may be COVID-19**

Use the B.C. COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool to see if you need to be tested for COVID-19:

<http://bc.thrive.health>

See the BCCDC page on COVID-19 Testing for more information: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

Once you have been tested you should self-isolate while you wait for the test results.

If your test is negative you should not return to work or school until you are feeling better.

If you feel unwell and are unsure about your symptoms, contact your health care provider or call 8-1-1.

You should continue to seek care for other medical conditions as needed, even if it's not related to COVID-19.

**Where can I get more information?**

Students, faculty and staff can check the following websites for the latest information available locally and across the province:

Fraser Health Authority

<https://www.fraserhealth.ca/>

Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

<https://www.vch.ca>

Vancouver Island Health Authority

<https://www.islandhealth.ca>

The British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)

[BC Centre for Disease Control \(bccdc.ca\)](http://www.bccdc.ca)

Public Health Agency of Canada:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health.html>