

COVID-19- Guidance for Homecare Workers

The Public Health Agency of Canada is continually monitoring the situation regarding COVID-19. There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for Canadians who are aged 65 years and over, with compromised immune systems, and with underlying medical conditions. As knowledge of the virus and its transmission has increased, there is now evidence that asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission can occur. As the situation evolves it is important to be aware of the most current information at www.gnb.ca/coronavirus.

Workers who are required to enter client's homes to provide their services, such as home support worker or allied health professionals, should only do so to offer essential services. Staying safe means asking questions. Call ahead to know your client's health status and prepare accordingly.

Guidance for case and contact management is provided by Public Health directly to the household.

Signs or symptoms:

Signs or symptoms of COVID-19:

- fever or signs of fever
- new onset/exacerbation of chronic cough
- sore throat
- runny nose
- headache
- new onset of fatigue
- new onset of muscle pain
- diarrhea
- loss of taste or smell

If a client shows any two of these symptoms, then they should take stay home, self-isolate and call Telecare 8-1-1.

Transmission:

Person-to-person transmission is mostly via infectious respiratory droplets or by touching a surface or an object contaminated with the virus and then proceeding to touch one's eyes, nose and mouth.

Control measures:

- If you are experiencing symptoms, stay home and isolate yourself from others as quickly as possible. Call the dedicated line 1-833-475-0724 for health care workers.
- Before leaving for a client's home, call to verify if anyone in the home is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or has been advised to self-isolate.

If the answer is **NO**, the client or a family member is neither symptomatic nor has been asked to self-isolate:

- Offer only essential services.
- Maintain a 2 meter (6 feet) separation distance from others while you are in the home, where possible.
- Homecare workers will be provided two surgical/procedure masks per shift for continuous use during their routine practice. Continuous use of a surgical/procedure mask is the practice of wearing the same surgical/procedure mask for repeated close contact with different patients, without removing the mask between patient encounters. The duration of extended use is dependent on the nature of the task or activity being undertaken. A mask can be worn in multiple homes as the potential benefit of staff wearing a mask for the full duration of their shift is prevention of transmission of unrecognized COVID-19 infection to their patients. The mask should be immediately changed and safely disposed of whenever it is damaged or soiled/wet,. If the mask is not damaged, soiled/wet or contaminated, it should be stored safely for reuse. When driving between clients, the Homecare worker must remove their mask per the guidance for extended and reuse below under personal protective equipment.
- Perform hand hygiene frequently. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- If transporting a client in your vehicle is necessary, have them sit in the back seat.

If the answer is **YES**, the client or another person in the home has tested positive for COVID-19, has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been asked to self-isolate due to travel or contact with a traveler:

- Re-assess if the work is essential or urgent, get guidance from your manager

- If you must visit the home, to provide meal prep and/or housekeeping, errand running, etc ask that individuals who are ill or in self-isolation to stay in their room during your visit. If this is not possible, ask that the client wear a mask while you are in the house (if tolerated) and maintain social distancing of 2m.
 - Home support workers should not provide direct in home care to a COVID-19 positive patient if they have not been trained or have access to PPE for contact precautions.
 - Wear a mask for the duration of your visit.
 - Encourage good respiratory hygiene (coughing into your sleeve or tissues)
 - Maintain a 2 meter (6 feet) separation distance from others, where possible
 - Perform hand hygiene frequently. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- If an ill client needs to be removed from the home, avoid transporting these individuals in your vehicles, call for an ambulance to transport and advise them that the client has tested positive for COVID-19 or has symptoms after having been asked to self-isolate.

Personal protective equipment:

- Homecare workers will be provided two surgical/procedure masks per shift for continuous use during their routine practice. Continuous use of a surgical/procedure mask is the practice of wearing the same surgical/procedure mask for repeated close contact with different patients, without removing the mask between patient encounters. The duration of extended use is dependent on the nature of the task or activity being undertaken. A mask can be worn in multiple homes as the potential benefit of staff wearing a mask for the full duration of their shift is prevention of transmission of unrecognized COVID-19 infection to their patients. The mask should be immediately changed and safely disposed of whenever it is damaged or soiled/wet,. If the mask is not damaged, soiled/wet or contaminated, it should be stored safely for reuse. When driving between clients, the Homecare worker must remove their mask per the guidance for extended and reuse below.
- Guidance for Doffing Surgical Mask with Ties for Continuous Use:
 - Clean hands.
 - Remove the surgical mask by untying the bottom ties and then the top ties. (If the ties cannot be undone without tearing the ties, the mask will be discarded).
 - The front is contaminated, so remove slowly and carefully.

- After removing facemask, visually inspect to determine if the mask has been damaged or is soiled/wet or contaminated. If damaged, soiled/wet or contaminated the mask must be discarded.
- If the surgical/ procedure mask is NOT damaged, soiled/wet or contaminated, it should be stored for re-use.
- Fold the mask in half (lengthwise or widthwise), so the outside surfaces are touching each other, carefully store in a paper bag labelled with your name and date. This will avoid destroying the shape of the mask and to prevent contamination.
- Clean hands.
- A disposable surgical mask can be worn for several hours if not damaged, soiled/wet or contaminated.

Cleaning:

Increased cleaning activity will reduce risk of retention of the virus on hard surfaces. Cleaning products registered in Canada with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and labelled as a broad-spectrum virucide are sufficient for COVID-19. A list of approved products can be found [here](#). All surfaces, especially those that are horizontal and frequently touched, should be cleaned and disinfected. It is recommended to keep the room properly ventilated by opening windows whenever safe and appropriate.

Laundry:

Use disposable single use gloves when handling dirty laundry. Place possibly contaminated laundry into a container with a plastic liner and do not shake. This minimizes the possibility of dispersing virus through the air. Wash with regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C), and dry well. Clothing and linens belonging to the ill person can be washed with other laundry. Use proper hand washing before putting on gloves and after removing them.

Homecare workers should monitor for symptoms:

If a Homecare worker develops COVID-19 symptoms (two or more of the following: new onset/exacerbation of chronic cough, fever or signs of fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, new onset of fatigue, new onset of muscle pain, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell) **while away from their work**, they should immediately call the dedicated line 1- 833-475-0724), stay off work and self-isolate, and notify their supervisor.

If a Homecare worker develops symptoms of COVID-19 **while at work** (two or more of the following: new onset/exacerbation of chronic cough, fever or signs of fever, sore throat, runny nose, headache, new onset of fatigue, new onset of muscle pain, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell) they should:

- avoid further patient contact

- immediately exclude themselves from the home
- do not remove their mask if wearing one or don one immediately
- wash their hands
- notify their supervisor
- call the dedicated line to arrange testing