

# Educational Bulletin

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

### WHAT IS COVID-19?

*The COVID-19 outbreak has now spread to over 114 countries with more than 118,000 cases<sup>1</sup>. COVID-19 is caused by a coronavirus labeled SARS-CoV-2<sup>5</sup>. Symptoms of human coronaviruses may be mild or more serious such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus<sup>2</sup>.*

*Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through<sup>6</sup>:*

- *respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze*
- *close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands*
- *touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands*

*Current evidence suggests person-to-person spread is efficient when there is close contact.*

*The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic<sup>1</sup>.*

### PREVENTION

At this time, there is no vaccine for COVID-19 or any natural health products that are authorized to treat or protect against COVID-19<sup>6</sup>. Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is recommending<sup>2</sup> for the public practice everyday preventive actions can help to limit the spread of respiratory viruses. These include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60-90% alcohol)<sup>3</sup>.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Consider a wave or elbow bump in place of a handshake, hug or kiss.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand. Dispose of any tissues you have used as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash your hands afterwards.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Reduce your exposure to crowded places by shopping or using transit during non-peak hours.

In healthcare, patients with suspected or confirmed with COVID-19 infection should be cared for while using Isolation Precautions to minimize the potential transmission of the disease<sup>5</sup>.

This includes contact precautions and droplet precautions or in the case of procedures that can cause aerosolization, droplet precautions are replaced with airborne precautions<sup>5</sup>.

The use of gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shield), gowns, the correct respiratory protection, cleaning and disinfection and frequent hand hygiene are also important to block the route of transmission<sup>5</sup>.

The WHO is monitoring the situation and assisting countries around the world with information to control the spread of this virus. Please visit for information updates and the pandemic status of COVID-19: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/>

# Educational Bulletin



## NON HEALTHCARE WORKPLACES GUIDELINES

Employers and employees have a role to play in reducing the spread of infection.

- Increase awareness about COVID-19 through communication with staff.
- Evaluate the workplace for areas where people have frequent contact with each other and shared objects.
- Encourage frequent hand hygiene, sneeze and cough etiquette, and staying home when ill.
- If COVID-19 symptoms develop, the employee should immediately be separated from others and sent home without using public transit, if possible.
- Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting with an approved disinfectant that has general virucidal claims. Pay particular attention to high-touch surfaces.
- Provide access to handwashing areas and place hand sanitizing dispensers in prominent locations throughout the workplace.

For more information on best practices for the workplace, consult Public Health Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>

## HOMECARE GUIDELINES

There may come a time where there needs to be care at home for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infections. Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has offered guidelines for homecare to help control the spread of infection and mirrors the types of processes that are used in healthcare<sup>4</sup>.

## DISINFECTANTS

As the identification of SARS-CoV-2 is very recent, it is unlikely that any hard surface disinfectants today include this virus on the label claim. Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) recommends the use of a DIN registered disinfectant with a general virucidal claim as sufficient for control of SARS-CoV-2 on environmental surfaces<sup>5</sup>.

The healthcare community's knowledge of COVID-19 is not yet complete and it is changing over time. News and updates can be found by visiting Public Health Agency of Canada and WHO links provided in this document.

This document will be updated if a major development in the prevention and control of COVID-19 is announced by Health Authorities.



### References:

1. WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19: March 11 2020, World Health Organization, March 11, 2020, <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19--11-march-2020>
2. About coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Public Health Agency of Canada, March 7, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>
3. Infection prevention and control for coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Interim guidance for acute healthcare settings, Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), Feb 24, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-acute-healthcare-settings.html#a4.7>
4. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): How to isolate at home when you have COVID-19, Public Health Agency of Canada, March 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-how-to-isolate-at-home.html>
5. How Coronavirus spreads, Public Health Agency of Canada, March 11, 2020 <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks.html>
6. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Symptoms and treatment, Public Health Agency of Canada, March 10, 2020 <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>