Communicable disease prevention A guide for employers

This guide is not meant for workplaces that are required to have an existing exposure control plan (ECP) related to communicable disease, such as health care employers. See section 6.34 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation for more information about ECPs.

As COVID-19 vaccinations have become widely available to British Columbians, the overall risk of COVID-19 transmission and serious consequences has diminished. Despite this, the virus will still circulate like other communicable diseases.

This guide provides information for employers to develop a communicable disease plan. An effective plan includes ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease and additional measures for when there's an elevated risk of communicable disease.

Managing communicable disease at your workplace is part of an effective occupational health and safety program.

Communicable disease prevention

A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another. Examples of communicable disease that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-19, norovirus, and seasonal influenza.

This guide describes a four-step process to help employers develop a communicable disease plan. This plan does not need to be written, posted, or approved by WorkSafeBC. Your plan may be supported by policies, signage, or other materials as appropriate to your workplace and the level of risk. Some employers may benefit from documenting their plan to assist in planning and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. A template is provided at the end of this guide for that purpose.

Step 1: Understand the risk

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable

disease transmission in your workplace. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health during periods of elevated risk.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases, including COVID-19, may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

Monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by your regional medical health officer or the provincial health officer if it's related to your industry, region, or workplace. This includes orders, guidance, notices, and recommendations issued by a medical health officer or the provincial health officer.

Step 2: Implement measures, practices, and policies to reduce the risk Ongoing measures — Maintain at all times

As an employer, you must implement and maintain the following measures at all times.

- Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g., fever or chills, coughing, diarrhea) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
- Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies (see section 4.85 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands regularly and to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.
- Make sure building ventilation is adequate and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For more



 information, see section 4.72 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Support employees in receiving vaccinations for COVID-19 and other vaccine-preventable conditions. 	 Working from home: Working from home: A guide to keeping your workers healthy and safe Setting up, organizing, and working comfortably in your home workspace
Additional measures — Implement as advised by Public Health	 Post signage in your workplace to support the measures you have in place.
During a period of elevated risk, the medical health officer or provincial health officer will provide information and guidance about the risk and how you can reduce it. The measures that you'll need	Make sure your supervisors are knowledgeable about your measures, practices, and policies, and incorporate these into supervision practices at the workplace.
to implement will depend on the type of disease and the methods of transmission.	 Provide information, signage, and materials to workers in a language they understand.
 Follow all direction from medical health officers and your regional health authority. 	 Be mindful that some aspects of managing communicable disease in the workplace may
Follow all orders, guidance, recommendations, and notices issued by the provincial health	raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek advice on these issues as necessary.
officer that are relevant to your industry, region, or workplace.	Step 4: Monitor your workplace
Depending on the guidance that public health	and update your plan as necessary
officials provide, you may need to assess the workplace to identify areas, activities, and	Continuously evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.
processes that may pose a risk to workers. You may also need to implement appropriate control measures to reduce the risk, following the direction of Public Health. WorkSafeBC has maintained key COVID-19 protocols that you can refer to. You can use these as appropriate and as advised by Public Health during periods of increased risk.	Joint health and safety committees and worker representatives play an important role in identifying and resolving workplace health and safety issues. When identifying and resolving safety issues, involve joint health and safety committees or worker health and safety representatives (or, in smaller workplaces, other workers).
Step 3: Communicate measures,	 Use workplace inspections and ongoing supervision in the workplace to ensure measures are functioning
practices, and policies	properly, followed, and maintained.
Make sure everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, receives information about your measures, practices, and policies for managing communicable disease. A template is	 Monitor the guidance, notices, orders, and recommendations from Public Health (as required in Step 1). Adjust your plan as necessary.
provided at the end of this guide that employers	☐ Monitor your workplace and risk level.
may find useful for this purpose. Ensure all workers understand the measures	 Change your measures, practices, and policies as necessary.
in place at your workplace.	Update your plan to reflect changes in your
Provide all your workers with information on policies for staying home when sick and	workplace, including work processes, staff, and premises.
working from home. The following resources are available for employers to support workers	Make sure workers know how to raise health and safety concerns



Communicable disease prevention planning template

The following template may be useful for employers in documenting and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. This is an optional resource, and may be used or adapted as suited to the individual employer.

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Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands and to cover coughs and sneezes. The following resources may be of use to employers in communicating appropriate practices around the workplace: · Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Handwashing • Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Cover coughs and sneezes Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.

Provide hand-hygiene facilities and appropriate supplies (see section 4.85 of the Occupational Health and Safety

	hout ventilation, or with improve air circulation,			ntilation system, the	y may take
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earn more here:	d of communicable dise	ease: Ventilation and	d air circulation.		
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