

INTRODUCTION

UVic is committed to providing safe and healthy environments for all members of the university community. We continue to monitor the public health guidance pertaining to COVID-19 impacts recognizing that it is now being managed primarily through vaccination as one of the various respiratory illnesses that can affect us all. In alignment with the [BC CDC post-secondary public health](#) guidance and following [WorkSafeBC](#) requirements, this plan outlines measures to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19.

SCOPE

This plan applies to all units, staff, faculty and students engaged in any university activity including in-person instruction and related academic activities, research, and administrative, operational and ancillary services.

In addition to this plan, some units may be required to follow applicable sector-specific safety guidelines or public health requirements. Similarly, those engaged in travel for university business, research or study (e.g. field research, community research, field schools and field trips) will need to follow any local, provincial or federal travel restrictions, local community entry requirements, or health and safety requirements of the host facility/organization. Please contact [OHSE](#) if you have questions about any specialized safety requirements.

Note: this plan does not replace any communicable disease related exposure control plans for workplaces or facilities that require one under the [BC OHS Regulation \(s. 6.34\)](#).

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION

Communicable disease prevention focuses on basic risk reduction principles to reduce the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. The fundamental components of communicable disease prevention includes both general measures to maintain at all times and additional measures to be implemented as advised by public health.

For the purpose of this plan, communicable diseases of concern are those that circulate in the community from time-to-time and may be introduced into a workplace including norovirus, influenza, COVID-19 and other similar illnesses. When warranted, the Provincial Health Officer or a medical health officer may indicate communicable diseases of concern to B.C. workplaces.

GENERAL PREVENTION MEASURES

Staying Home When Sick

- All employees and students should continue to do a daily health check for any new or worsening symptoms that may prevent them from attending in-person university or campus activities.
- If you are ill or have [symptoms](#) of communicable disease, including COVID-19:
 - please stay home until you feel well enough to return to regular activities and no longer have a fever
 - notify your supervisor or instructor of your absence
 - consult the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to see if you should get tested, and contact your health care provider or 811 if you require medical advice

- Unit leaders should follow the sick leave provisions in the appropriate collective agreement to support employees, and contact their Human Resources Consultant if advice is required.
- Instructors should follow established protocols to support student absence due to illness, and contact the leader of their academic unit (Chair/Director/Dean) if advice is required.
- Please review the [Self-Assessment and Sick Leave protocol](#) for more information.
- For those employees who are able to work at home while they are recovering from their illness/symptoms, please refer to the [HR remote working](#) website which includes guidance on setting up your home workstation, ergonomic tips, FAQs and other resources.

Promoting hand-washing and hygiene practices

- Washing your hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using hand sanitizers if a washroom or sink is not readily available, is one of the most simple and effective ways to minimize the spread of communicable diseases.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow when you sneeze or cough, and avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands will also help to reduce the spread of germs.
- All washroom facilities on campus are open and available for employees, students and the public to facilitate regular handwashing. The university will also continue to supply hand sanitizer stations at all main entrances to buildings to promote hand hygiene.
- Units who provide services in busy client-facing settings such as retail checkouts, kiosks, food service counters and other similar areas, are encouraged to keep a supply of portable hand sanitizer available for their customer and client use.
- The university will continue to post signage throughout campus, along with seasonal messaging, to remind everyone of these important practices.

Routine cleaning

- The university is committed to maintaining a clean environment through routine cleaning practices, and implementing enhanced cleaning practices if directed by public health during any periods of elevated risk.
- Facilities Management is responsible for routine cleaning of academic spaces such as classrooms, washrooms and other public areas on campus. Residence Services is responsible for routine cleaning of student housing facilities.
- Areas or units which may have specialized cleaning practices and schedules due to their activities or regulatory requirements (e.g. laboratories, health clinics, isolation rooms, food service areas, event planners, etc.) should continue to follow those protocols, in addition to any other requirements that may still be in place from public health.
- Individual units or office areas should clean and disinfect surfaces or shared equipment (e.g. photocopiers, keyboards, desks, appliances, etc.) in accordance with their usual housekeeping practices.

Building Ventilation (HVAC Systems)

- Following the direction of WorkSafeBC and public health, institutions must ensure that building heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are operating and maintained in accordance with [WorkSafeBC requirements](#) and relevant ASHRAE Standards.
- Facilities Management monitors and maintains HVAC systems to ensure those systems continue to meet WorkSafeBC requirements, including regular filter changes and balancing for air flow, temperature, humidity and other design parameters.
- The university has also taken extra steps to further improve indoor air quality as described in the section, Enhanced Ventilation.

Supporting Vaccination

- Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of serious illness from many communicable diseases, such as COVID-19 and influenza.
- The university encourages everyone who is eligible and able, to consider vaccination to protect yourself and others, and visit ImmunizeBC for the full list of recommended vaccines and immunization schedules.
- UVic employees are [entitled to up to three hours of paid leave](#) to be vaccinated against COVID-19, if required.
- [Learn more about the benefits and safety of the COVID-19 vaccine](#), and [register](#) to receive an invite to book a vaccine appointment.

ENHANCED SAFETY MEASURES

Enhanced Ventilation

The university continues to maintain the following additional measures for building HVAC systems:

- HVAC filter upgrades to MERV-13 in the majority of buildings
- increased frequency of air filter replacement throughout the fall and winter semesters
- increased supply of fresh air into occupied spaces
- increased rate of air exchange where possible (i.e. total airflow in occupied spaces)
- daily pre-occupancy air change (flush) for building HVAC systems

For naturally ventilated classrooms that are not serviced by a building HVAC system, HEPA air-purifying units have been installed.

NON-MEDICAL MASKS and FACE COVERINGS

- The decision to wear a mask is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some employees, students or visitors may choose to wear a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. An individual's choice to practice additional personal prevention measures should be respected.

- Wearing masks in most health-care settings and units is a personal choice and not required by public health. In some health-care settings, you must wear a medical mask when requested by a health-care professional. Please check with the facility about their policies before your visit.
- Information on non-medical masks is available from [BCCDC](#).

RESPONDING TO ELEVATED RISK

- The level of risk of certain communicable diseases, including COVID-19, may elevate from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level or within a workplace.
- The university will monitor public health information and be responsive to any further directives from the local medical health officer or provincial health officer.
- Any changes to prevention measures during periods of elevated risk will be communicated to those affected in our campus community.

COMMUNICATION AND MONITORING

- OHSE will regularly monitor and review communicable disease information from public health, and update the campus community of any changes affecting university activities, including updating this plan as required.
- This plan will be available on the [OHSE website](#) and shared widely with our campus community. The university also maintains a website for up to date [COVID-19 information](#).
- Leaders should ensure that everyone on their teams have reviewed this plan and understand and follow the measures in place.
- The prevention measures will be reinforced through campus signage, social media and other communication tools on a regular basis.
- The ongoing review and evaluation of this plan will involve the joint University Safety Committee, as part of its annual consultation process on health and safety programs.
- Monitoring of the prevention and safety measures is a shared responsibility of leaders for those areas and individuals they supervise, units who have specific responsibilities identified in this plan, joint local safety committees as part of regular building inspections as appropriate, and OHSE.
- Individuals should report any health and safety concerns to their supervisor, who is responsible to follow-up and address any concerns.
- Individuals may also contact their union representative, joint local safety committee, or OHSE for assistance with a safety concern or question.