

# Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



## Guidance for Day Camps, Family Camps, and Overnight Camps During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Updated: June 18, 2021

### NOTES

This guidance is for camp operators and is not intended for other individuals who utilize camp sites, such as tourism operators.

Camp operators are responsible for remaining up to date and communicating public health requirements to people who attend camp.

Staff and / or campers who are experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or who have been identified as a close contact to a positive case of COVID-19 are **not permitted** to attend a camp until symptoms have resolved. Staff and / or campers who have returned from travel outside of Canada are **not permitted** to attend a camp until self-isolation has ended. Please see the [BCCDC Self-Isolation site](#) for information.

The Office of the Provincial Health Officer and BCCDC have endorsed the comprehensive [guidelines for camp operators](#) for day camps, family camps and overnight camps developed by the BC Camps Association. Please review these resources for additional context, protocols and procedures, and examples of safe camp settings.

WorkSafeBC has developed [protocols for day camp operators](#) to support robust COVID-19 Safety Plans. Please review these protocols for inclusion in your plan.



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Ministry of Health



BC Centre for Disease Control

If you have fever, a new cough, or are having difficulty breathing, call 8-1-1.



## Background

This document provides guidance for summer camp operators, administrators, and staff to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone in the camp setting. This guidance may be complemented by additional precautions set by camp operators.

BCCDC is the primary source of information about COVID-19 in BC. Resources on the BCCDC website can be used to support learning and to respond to questions you may receive from members of your community. More information is available [here](#).

Camp settings are considered controlled environments. This is because camps host a consistent grouping of people, there are robust illness policies for sick campers and staff, and there is an ability to implement effective personal practices that are followed by most people most of the time in the setting (e.g. diligent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, etc.). This makes them different from public places like retail stores and public transit. For these reasons, camps are not subject to the Provincial Health Officer Order on Gatherings and Events but are required to follow protocols and procedures set out by WorkSafeBC, the BC Camps Association (facility-based camps) or the BC Recreation and Parks Association (urban camps) where relevant, and this guidance.

## COVID-19 Vaccination and Camp Operations

Everyone who is eligible should be encouraged to seek and complete vaccination against COVID-19. However, it is recognized that not everyone is able to be vaccinated. Therefore, vaccination is not a condition to attend or work at a camp and inquiring about a person's vaccination status is not the responsibility of camp operators. For more information on COVID-19 vaccination, please visit [BCCDC](#) and register to get your appointment at [GetVaccinated](#).

## COVID-19 and Children and Youth

COVID-19 tends to have a low infection rate among children and youth. Evidence suggests children and youth become infected with COVID-19 primarily in household settings where a household member (usually an adult) has the infection. The majority of people who become infected with COVID-19 will experience a mild illness; many children and youth will not experience symptoms at all, but common symptoms include a low-grade fever and dry cough. Evidence has not concluded whether asymptomatic children pose a risk to other children or adults. Children who are less than a year old and children who are immunocompromised or have pre-existing lung conditions are at a higher risk of severe disease.

## Provincial Health Officer Orders

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) has issued several Orders to protect public health. Orders are developed, amended, and rescinded based on the evolution of the pandemic, so please check the [PHO website](#) regularly for updates.

The following Orders are relevant to summer camps:

- [Overnight Camps for Children and Youth](#)
  - Explains that an overnight camp must operate with a COVID-19 Safety Plan that aligns with the BC Camps Association COVID-19 Guidelines for Overnight Camps ([available here](#)) and is submitted to the local medical health officer (contact information [available here](#)).
  - Day Camps and Family Camps must develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan prior to camps commencing. The safety plan does not have to be submitted to the medical health officer.
- [Gatherings and Events](#)



- This Order does not apply to day camps as long as campers and staff are not all in one area and if they are able to practice physical distancing as much as possible. However, this Order explains the requirements camp operators must meet if they hold indoor or outdoor events in the camp setting outside of normal camp operations.
- [Workplace and Post Secondary Institution Safety](#)
  - Explains that camp staff, volunteers, and others attending the camp must conduct and pass a daily health check before attending camp.
- [Workplace Safety Plans](#)
  - Explains the requirement to have a COVID-19 Safety Plan in place in accordance with [WorkSafeBC protocols for camps](#).
- [Travellers and Employers](#)
  - Explains anyone who has returned from outside of Canada to BC must self-isolate for 14 days.

## Testing

Anyone with [symptoms of COVID-19](#) should seek [testing](#), regardless of their vaccination status. Testing of campers and / or staff before entering the camp setting is at the discretion of the camp operator.

Camps should consider Point of Contact (POC) testing for symptomatic individuals. POC testing provides rapid screening of potential cases and is especially useful in remote locations and where access to community testing centres is difficult.

Provincial Health Services Authority POC testing information is available [here](#). Affordable testing kits are available privately and may be a suitable option for testing small numbers of symptomatic individuals.

## Case Finding, Contact Tracing and Outbreak Management

Active testing of people with mild COVID-19 like symptoms helps public health to identify cases (case finding). If a person is found to have a confirmed case of COVID-19, the local medical health officer will lead the response. Public health staff will conduct contact tracing to identify any close contacts and manage any clusters or outbreaks. Public health will also ensure that campers, staff, and parents have access to health care providers and that appropriate supports are in place to support self-isolation.

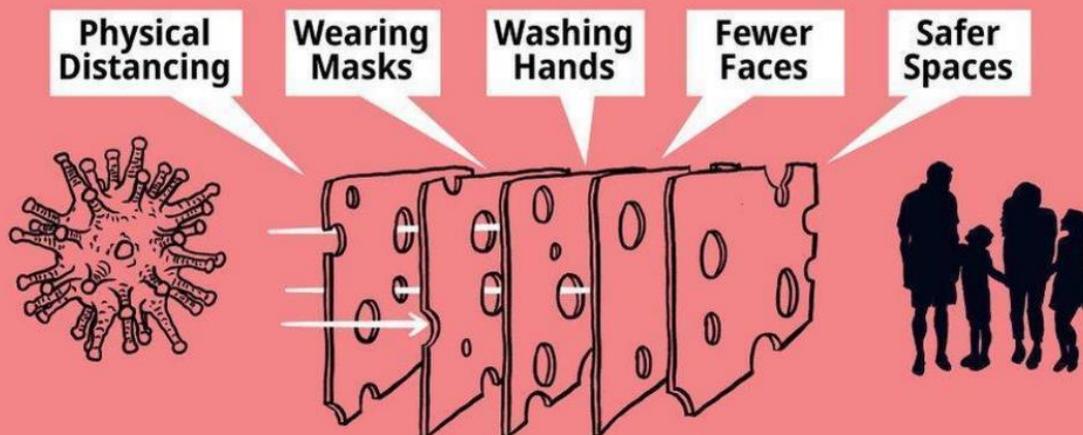
At camp, the medical health officer / public health may direct or advise that operators undertake additional measures such as cleaning and temporary restriction or modification of certain camp activities may be required. Only in exceptional circumstances would a medical health officer consider a camp closure.

To support public health in contact tracing, it is strongly encouraged that camp operators maintain daily attendance records (including contact information) of everyone who enters the camp property.

## A Layered Approach to Infection Prevention and Control



# The Swiss Cheese Model



**All layers are important because no layer is perfect.**

COVID-19 IN BC

A layered approach to infection prevention and control should be taken to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in camp settings. When multiple layers of protection are in place, the approach is more likely to be effective if any one layer of protection fails. Some layers of protection rely on camp policies and practices, while others rely on individual behaviours of campers and staff. When many layers are combined, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is substantially reduced.

Remember to:

- Maintain physical distance between camp households indoors
- Improve ventilation indoors
- Wear masks when in indoor spaces (see Mask guidance in this document)
- Practice handwashing, hand/cough hygiene, and [clean and disinfect](#) surfaces and objects touched by many people.

## Safer Spaces: Outdoor Activities and Indoor Activities

### Outdoor Activities

Camp operators are encouraged to hold activities outside as much as possible. Playgrounds, swimming pools, and water / spray parks are safe settings. Singing is only permitted outdoors. Have foul weather contingency plans in place.

### Indoor Activities

If a program or activity must occur indoors, ventilate the space as much as possible (e.g., keep windows and doors open) and spread people out as much as possible. Consider different common space, arts and crafts, and learning environment configurations to allow space between campers and adults (e.g., different desk and table formations). Arrange desks/tables to maximize space between campers. Seating arrangements where campers directly face one another



should be avoided, particularly for middle and secondary school-aged campers. Use consistent seating arrangements where possible.

### Ventilation

To date there is no evidence that a building's ventilation system, in good operating condition, would contribute to the spread of COVID-19. Good indoor ventilation alone cannot protect people from exposure to the virus; however, it may reduce risk when used in addition to other preventive measures.

For activities that take place indoors, application of the basic principles of good indoor air quality should continue, including supplying outdoor air to replenish indoor air by removing and diluting contaminants that naturally occur in indoor settings. All mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems should be checked to ensure they are working properly. Where possible, camp operators should open windows if weather permits and it doesn't impact the functioning of ventilation systems. For more information, see WorkSafe BC [guidance on general ventilation and air circulation](#).

### Physical Distancing

Use floor markings and posters to encourage physical distancing. This may include designated entrance and exit doors. Do not reduce the number of exits. Ensure any alterations to the premises adheres to the fire code.

Barriers can be installed in places where physical distance cannot regularly be maintained, such as a reception desk and / or food service areas.

### Camp Population

The BC Camps Association suggests the use of consistent **camp households** to reduce the number of close contacts at camp. A camp household is the small group of campers and staff who are together each day and/or who share a sleeping space should not be more than 14 people in total (e.g., 12 campers and 2 staff). Add after 2 staff). For municipal recreation programs the BC Recreation and Parks Association recommends a 1:15 staff to camper ratio for age 6 and over, and 1:12 for age 5 and younger.

Camp households:

- Sit together to eat during mealtimes
- Participate in indoor programming together, maintaining distance from other camp households
- Share the same sleeping accommodation

Camp households can interact outdoors with other households without masks and with limited physical contact.

**Staff** often serve in multiple roles at camp and can interact with multiple groups of households when outdoors. When indoors, staff must wear masks except for when they are in their accommodation space. Masks do not have to be worn outdoors.

### Overnight Specific Guidance

The BC Camps Association has developed comprehensive guidance for [overnight camps](#). To align with this guidance:

**Child and Youth camp households** (up to 12 campers plus 2 camp leaders):

- Can share a cabin, tent, or bedroom.
- Should wear masks when in common indoor areas where other camp households are present



- Sleeping accommodations should provide a 1 metre physical distance between the heads of individuals, or if heads cannot be 1 metre apart, temporary barriers may be used (e.g., curtains, sheets).
  - For bunk beds, position the head of the camper in the top bunk opposite the position of the camper in the bottom bunk.
  - For side-by-side beds, position campers head-to-toe.
  - For end-to-end beds, position campers toe-to-toe where possible, and otherwise head-to-toe to maximize distance between heads.

### Family Camps

Family Camps are programs in which family members participate together in activities. Family Camp households are distinct from day camp households and an individual cannot be part of both. For example, a child staying with their parents as part of a Family Camp cannot be part of a day camp household

In addition to the above, in line with the guidance from the BC Camps Association, Family Camps must adhere to the following:

- Up to 12 people from more than one family can form a household that is consistent for the duration of the camp.
- Families may have their own private accommodation or be in shared accommodation with close friends or family.
- Where buildings have shared indoor spaces between non-household individuals, masks will be worn in common spaces.
- Family Camp households will follow day camp household guidance for activities, indoor and outdoor spaces, and dining.
- Scenarios where a family rents a cabin and the child(ren) take part in day camp programs are not Family Camps. The guidance for day camp households apply in this situation.

### Staff

- Can share a cabin, tent, or bedroom.
- Do not have to wear masks when in their overnight accommodation.
- Wear masks in shared or common indoor spaces where others are present.
- Arrange shared accommodations for individuals in the same staff cohort so that beds are at least 2 metres apart and staff sleep head-to-toe where possible.
  - If beds cannot be at least 2 metres apart, use temporary barriers (e.g., curtains, sheets) to prevent droplet spread while sleeping.

### Food Services

Camps can choose to use a model where campers come prepared with food and drinks from home, a model that provides food and drink to campers, or a blend of both. Meals should be had outdoors where possible. Everyone should wash their hands before and after eating and avoid sharing food and drinks with each other.

### Physical Distancing

Ensure there are 2 metres between tables; camp households eat together.

### Plated / Family Style / Staff-Assisted Buffet

This style of food service is permitted; ensure campers do not congregate around these areas and that everyone maintains their distance from other camp groups.



## Food / Drinks from Home

Campers who bring food from home should pack a Thermos, container, or insulated lunch bag and keep it in their backpack until ready to eat or drink. Refillable beverage containers are encouraged; dedicated refilling stations should be used to refill these containers (and not a bathroom sink).

## Self-Serve Food / Drinks

Campers who are able to practice physical distancing and hand hygiene can access self-serve food stations, if:

- Hand washing facilities or alcohol-based sanitizers are within easy reach of the station.
- Signs are posted to remind campers and staff to wash or sanitize their hands before touching self-serve items, and to maintain a two-metre distance from others.
- High touch surfaces at the station and utensils that are used for self-serve items are regularly cleaned and sanitized.

## Drop-off and Pick-Up

Drop-off and pick-up should occur outside and as close to the entrance to the property as possible; multiple locations and staggered times are encouraged. Face coverings are required for all adults if they enter an indoor space.

## Visitors

Visitors entering the camp should be limited to people who support activities that are required for the benefit of campers and / or the required maintenance of camp facilities. Visitors should assess their health before attending the camp and wear a mask while at the camp.

## Transportation

If campers need to travel on a shared bus, van, or shuttle:

- Everyone should wash their hands before boarding and when they arrive at their destination.
- Everyone aged 9 and older should wear a mask.
- Ensure the vehicle is cleaned and disinfected in alignment with [BCCDC guidelines](#).
- Load back to front, offload front to back and assign seating (each person should have their own seat where possible).
- Commercial vehicle operators should follow precautions set out by [Transport Canada](#).

## Illness Policies for Campers and Staff

Ensure the camp has flexible sick-leave and absence policies that discourage staff from reporting to work while sick. Ensure the camper refund policy is clearly communicated to all camper families, including any changes relating to absences due to COVID-19 related symptoms. When possible, camps should consider a flexible refund policy that will discourage a sick child attending camp.

## Stay Home if Sick or When Required to Self-Isolate

Campers, staff, and other persons who are planning to attend the camp should stay home when they are sick.

The following campers, staff or other persons must stay home and self-isolate as per public health direction:

- A person confirmed by public health as a case of COVID-19; or
- A person confirmed by public health as a close contact of a confirmed case or outbreak of COVID-19; or



- A person who has travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days.

Anyone required to self-isolate will be supported by public health. Additional information is available from [BCCDC](#).

## Daily Health Check

Camp operators should ensure that staff, campers, or others area entering the camp are aware they should not come if they are sick or are required to self-isolate. Camp operators can support this practice by communicating the requirement for everyone to do a daily health check. Drop-offs are an ideal time for daily health checks; camp staff should ask parents and caregivers to confirm (verbally or in writing) that their child does not have any symptoms relating to COVID-19.

For staff, an active daily health check must be completed in line with the requirements of the Provincial Health Officer's Order on [Workplace Safety](#). WorkSafe BC resources to support this can be found [here](#).

If a staff member, camper (or their parent or caregiver) or other person seeking to enter the camp indicates that the symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition and are not unusual for that individual, they can attend camp. No assessment or note should be required from a health care provider.

## Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness. Everyone should practice diligent hand hygiene often. To learn about how to perform hand hygiene using soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, please refer to the BCCDC's [hand washing poster](#).

Everyone should:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

## When Someone Becomes Sick at Camp

Isolation plans for sick staff and campers (and accommodating more than one ill person at a time) on site needs to be robust and safe, especially if isolating a younger camper. Anticipate that some ill people may not be able to return home immediately or at all (e.g., staff who come from out of province or region) and may need to isolate on site. Clusters of illness at a camp should be reported to the local medical health officer.

- If a camper or non-resident staff member develops a new cough (unrelated to pre-existing conditions such as asthma), fever, chills, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, or other symptoms of COVID-19 during the camp session, isolate them away from others immediately, and send them home as soon as possible.
  - While waiting for a sick camper to be tested or picked up, a staff member should stay with the camper in a room isolated from others or at least 2 metres from others if a separate room is not available. The staff member should remain at least 2 metres away from the camper. A mask should be worn by both the camper (if tolerated) and the staff person.
- The affected individual should isolate at home and contact the COVID-19 helpline 8-1-1 for next steps and to see if a COVID-19 test is recommended. If the test is negative, the individual can return to camp once symptoms are resolved. If the test is positive, the individual must isolate at home until directed otherwise by public health (usually at least 10 days after illness onset).



- If a resident staff member develops a new cough (unrelated to pre-existing conditions such as asthma), fever, chills, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, or other symptoms of COVID-19 during the camp session, isolate them away from others immediately, and arrange for a COVID-19 test.
  - A sick staff member should isolate themselves in their accommodation or a private room until a COVID-19 test can be arranged.
  - If the staff member tests positive, they will need to self-isolate at camp or return to their permanent residence until directed otherwise by public health (usually at least 10 days after illness onset).
  - If the person tests negative and symptoms resolve, they can return to work.

Anyone who is rapidly getting more ill or is in distress should be seen by medical personnel as soon as possible; do not hesitate to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.

## Masks

Masks are required to be worn by **staff** in indoor settings except when:

- Sitting or standing at their desk or workstation
- There is a barrier in place
- Eating or drinking
- They are in their own accommodation unit
- In compliance with other WorkSafeBC guidance

Masks are required to be worn by all **campers** in Grade 4 (9 years old as of December 31, 2021) and older when indoors except when:

- Campers are eating or drinking
- Campers are with only their own household or there is adequate ventilation and spacing between households
- Campers are in their own accommodation unit

Camps are permitted to enact their own more rigid mask wearing policies if deemed appropriate for their site, program, and circumstances. Staff should be trained on proper donning and doffing of PPE including masks; refer to [WorkSafeBC](#) for details. Masks are not needed when urgent actions are required to support child or staff safety.

