



HealthLinkBC

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Last updated: **April 22, 2026**

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including influenza and the common cold.

Get immunized against COVID-19

Immunization is safest and most effective way to protect yourself against severe illness from COVID-19.

Updated COVID-19 vaccines are available free of charge for B.C. residents during the 2025-26 immunization program. These vaccines help protect against serious illness from COVID-19.

To get immunized against COVID-19 visit [Government of British Columbia: COVID-19 immunizations](#).

To learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, vaccine recommendations and managing common side effect, visit [HealthLink BC File #124a - COVID-19 mRNA vaccines](#).

Spring COVID-19 vaccine

B.C.'s COVID-19 spring program is expected to run from April 22 to July 31, 2026. The program provides vaccines to residents who are at highest risk of severe illness and complications from COVID-19, based on recommendations from the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#).

While one dose of the vaccine during viral respiratory illness season in the fall and winter offers strong protection for most people, an additional spring dose is strongly recommended for people who could get seriously sick, including:

- Adults 80 years and older
- Indigenous adults 70 years and older
- Residents of long-term care homes and assisted living facilities and those awaiting placement
- People 6 months and older who have been diagnosed as clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV 1 or CEV 2)

The following people may also benefit from a spring COVID-19 booster:

- Adults 65 years and older

- Indigenous adults 55 years and older

If you are 65 years or older and registered in the [Get Vaccinated](#) system, you will receive a notification once they go out in late April.

If you have questions about your eligibility for a COVID-19 immunization, check with your health care provider or call **8-1-1**.

Symptoms

To learn about COVID-19 symptoms, what to do if you are feeling ill, and who may be at higher risk for complications, visit:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: If you have COVID-19](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Symptoms](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)

Testing

A COVID-19 test is recommended when its result will help you and your health care provider make decisions about your treatment or care. For more information about who needs testing, visit:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Testing for COVID-19](#)
- [Testing](#)

Some symptoms could be signs of other conditions or medical issues and you may need to seek medical care, even if it's not related to COVID-19. If you feel unwell and are unsure about your symptoms, contact your health care provider or call [8-1-1](#).

Rapid Antigen Tests

You can use a rapid antigen test at home to find out if you have COVID-19. The results will be ready in less than 20 minutes.

Test kits are available free of charge at [some community pharmacies](#). Once the existing supply of free tests runs out, some pharmacies may offer them for you to purchase.

A positive rapid antigen test is acceptable for getting treatment, if you are eligible.

Learn more about how to use a Rapid Testing kit and what the test results mean:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Rapid Testing](#)

Treatment

There are some specific treatments available for COVID-19. For more information, visit [BC Centre for Disease Control: Treatments](#).

To find out if treatment may be right for you, visit the [Province of British Columbia: COVID-19 testing and treatments](#) page.

If your infant is less than 3 months of age and has a fever or shows signs of illness, they should be seen by a health care provider. For more information, visit [BC Centre for Disease Control: COVID-19 illness in children](#).

For additional information on COVID-19 treatments, visit:

- [BCCDC: Patient Information about Paxlovid \(PDF, 163KB\)](#)
- [BCCDC: Questions and Answers: Nirmatrelvir/ritonavir \(Paxlovid\) \(PDF, 180KB\)](#)
- [BCCDC: Patient Information about Remdesivir \(PDF, 210KB\)](#)
- [Province of British Columbia: Paxlovid for B.C. residents](#)

When seeing a health care provider, please tell them:

- Your symptoms
- Where you have been travelling or living
- If you had close or prolonged contact with a sick person, especially if they had a fever, cough or difficulty breathing

Useful resources

For a list of trusted sources that HealthLinkBC uses to provide British Columbians with health information and advice, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca.

For information and updates on COVID-19 in other languages, visit:

- [COVID-19 immunizations](#)

American Sign Language videos are also available.

If you have concerns or questions about your health, contact [8-1-1](#) at any time or speak with your health care provider.

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/health-library/healthlinkbc-files or your local public health unit. For non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** (toll-free). For the deaf and hard of hearing, call **7-1-1**. Translation services are available in more than 130 languages on request.