



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: July 9, 2021

NOTES

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

Camp operators are responsible for implementing the guidance as well as providing and communicating the latest public health requirements to people attending the camp.

Staff, volunteers, and campers who are experiencing [symptoms of COVID-19](#) are **not permitted** to attend camp. They should self-isolate until their symptoms have resolved and use the [BC COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) to see if they need to be tested for COVID-19. If they are a close contact of someone with confirmed COVID-19, they should self-isolate and monitor for symptoms. They are not permitted to attend camp until they have completed their self-isolation period as directed by public health and have no symptoms.

The Office of the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) endorse the comprehensive [guidelines for camp operators](#) for day camps, family camps and overnight camps developed by the BC Camps Association. Please review the resource for additional context, protocols and examples of safe camp settings.



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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 camp settings. This guidance may be complemented by additional measures set by camp operators.

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) is the primary source of information about COVID-19 in B.C. Resources on the BCCDC website can be used to respond to questions you may receive from camp attendees. More information is available [here](#).

Camp settings are considered controlled environments. This is because camps host a consistent group of people at a given time, there are robust screening and illness policies for sick campers and staff, and they can also implement infection and prevention control practices that people must follow at the camp (e.g., diligent hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, etc.). This makes camps different from public settings like retail stores and public transit where there are many different people moving in and out throughout the day. For these reasons, camps are not subject to the [Provincial Health Officer's Order on Gatherings and Events](#) but are required to follow this guidance and the protocols set by WorkSafeBC, the BC Camps Association (facility-based camps) or the BC Recreation and Parks Association (urban camps) where relevant.

COVID-19 Immunization and Camp Operations

Everyone who is eligible should be encouraged to get immunized against COVID-19. However, there are some people who may not be immunized for medical or other reasons. Therefore, immunization is not a provincial requirement to attend or work at a camp and inquiring about a person's immunization status is not the responsibility of camp operators. For more information on COVID-19 immunization, please visit [BCCDC](#) and register to get your appointment at [GetVaccinated](#).

COVID-19 and Children

The infection rate for COVID-19 tends to be much lower among children and youth. Evidence suggests children and youth become infected with COVID-19 primarily through their household, when a household member (usually an adult) has the infection. Many children and youth who have COVID-19 will not show symptoms. If they do have symptoms, they are generally much milder than for adults. Common symptoms include a low-grade fever and dry cough. For more information, please visit BCCDC's [webpage](#).

To date, there is a lack of conclusive evidence on whether asymptomatic children pose a risk to other children or adults. Children who are less than a year old and those who are [immunocompromised](#) or have pre-existing lung conditions are at a higher risk of severe illness.

Testing

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

Camps can consider point-of-care (POC) testing for asymptomatic 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. For more information on POC testing and requirements, visit the Provincial Health Services Authority's POC testing [webpage](#).

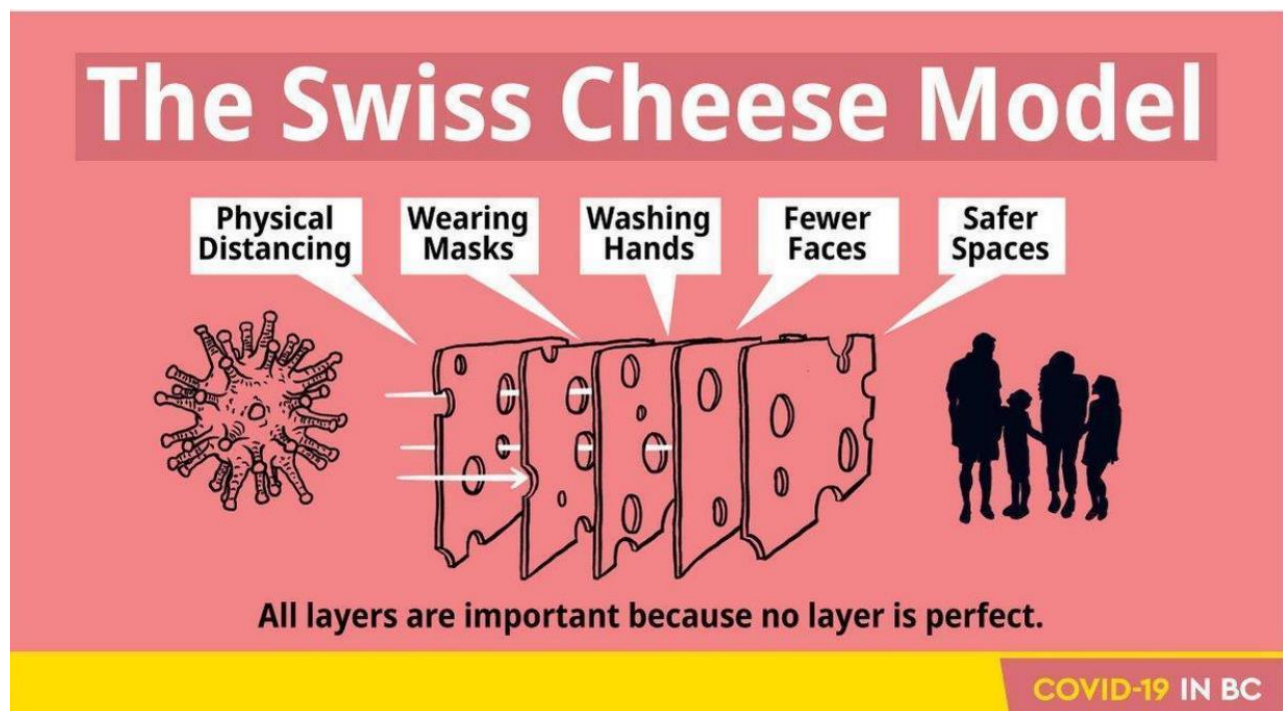
Case Finding, Contact Tracing and Outbreak Management

Active testing of people with mild COVID-19 like symptoms helps public health to identify cases. 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 they are supported during self-isolation.

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

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

A Layered Approach to Infection Prevention and Control



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

Remember to:

- Improve ventilation indoors;

- Encourage campers to:
 - Maintain physical distance with other groups while indoors. For public health contact tracing purposes (if required), each group shall be considered as one [camp cohort](#) – see the “[camp population](#)” section for more info;
 - Practice hand hygiene with frequent hand washing or the use of hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol content and follow respiratory etiquette (cover cough and sneezes with their elbows, throw away used tissues); and,
- [Clean and disinfect](#) surfaces and objects frequently touched by many people.

Safer Spaces: Outdoor Activities and Indoor Activities

Outdoor Activities

Camp operators are encouraged to hold activities outdoors as much as possible. Playgrounds, trails, fields, swimming pools, water/spray parks and other green spaces are lower-risk compared to indoor spaces. Singing outdoors is best or in a large indoor space with good ventilation. Plan for different activities in case of bad weather.

Indoor Activities

If a program or activity must occur indoors, ensure there is good air circulation and spread people out as much as possible. Consider creating different common space for arts and crafts, table and chair configurations to allow more space between participants. Seating arrangements where campers directly face one another should be avoided. Use consistent seating arrangements where possible.

Indoor Air Quality and Ventilation

For activities that take place indoors, ensure there is good air circulation for optimal indoor air quality. Where possible, open doors and windows if weather permits and it doesn't impact the functioning of ventilation systems.

To date, there is no strong evidence that a building's ventilation system, when in good operating condition, would contribute to the spread of COVID-19. That being said, good indoor ventilation, when used with other infection and prevention control measures, may reduce the risk of transmission.

Regularly inspect and maintain all mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems to ensure they are working properly. For more information, see WorkSafe BC's [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.

Camp Population

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

Camp households should:

- Sit and eat together during mealtimes;
- Participate in indoor programming together;
- Maintain distance from other camp households; and,
- Share the same sleeping accommodation.

Camp households can interact outdoors with other households but should maintain physical distance and limit physical contact.

Staff often have multiple roles at camp so they can interact with multiple camp households when they are outdoors.

Overnight Specific Guidance

The BC Camps Association has developed comprehensive guidance for [overnight camps](#). Based on their guidance:

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

- Can share a cabin, tent or bedroom.
- Sleeping accommodations should provide a one metre distance between individuals. If individuals cannot be one 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, or
 - For end-to-end beds, position campers toe-to-toe where possible, and otherwise head-to-toe to maximize distance between their heads.

Family Camps

These are programs where members of the same family participate in activities. Family camp households are distinct from day camp households. An individual cannot participate in a family camp and a day camp if the camp offers both. For example, a child staying with their parents as part of a family camp cannot be part of a different day camp household.

In addition to the above, in accordance 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 one consistent household for the duration of the camp.
- Families may have their own private accommodation or be in shared accommodation with close friends or another family.
- Family camp households need to follow the same public health advice as day camp household guidance for activities, indoor and outdoor spaces as well as dining.
- When a family rents a cabin and their child(ren) take part in day camp programs, it is not considered a family camp. The guidance for day camp households apply in this situation.

Staff

- Can share a cabin, tent, or bedroom with others.
- Arrange shared accommodations for staff so that beds are at least two metres apart and staff sleep head-to-toe where possible.
 - If beds cannot be at least two metres apart, use temporary barriers (e.g., curtains, sheets).

Food Services

Camps can choose to use various models of food services: where campers bring their own food and drinks from home, camps provide food and beverages to campers or a blend of both. Meals should be outdoors where possible. Everyone should clean their hands before and after eating and avoid sharing food and drinks with each other.

Physical Distancing

Ensure there are two metres between tables and the same camp cohort should eat together.

Plated/Family Style Serving within the Same Cohort/Staff-Assisted Buffet

These styles of food service are permitted. If meals are served using family style at each table or staff-assisted buffet style, ensure other camp cohorts stay and dine at their table rather than mingling with other tables and campers do not congregate around buffet area.

Food/Drinks from Home

Campers who bring food from home should pack their food in containers and keep their food cold with a thermos, insulated lunch bag and/or an icepack for food safety. Refillable beverage containers such as water bottles and personal cups are encouraged. Dedicated refilling stations (not a bathroom sink) should be used to refill their containers.

Self-Serve Food/Drinks

Campers who can practice physical distancing and wash their hands before and after use can access self-serve food stations. Operators need to ensure that:

- Hand washing facilities or alcohol-based sanitizers are within easy reach of the station.
- Signs are posted to remind campers and staff to wash their hands or use alcohol-based sanitizers 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 disinfected after service.

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 entrances and staggered times are encouraged.

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 do a health check for possible symptoms of illness before entering the camp.

Transportation

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

- Everyone should clean their hands before boarding and when they arrive at their destination.
- Ensure the vehicle is cleaned and disinfected in alignment with [BCCDC guidelines](#).
- Passengers should enter from the back door to the front door, they should get off from the front door. Assign designated seating to each person where possible.
- Commercial vehicle operators should follow the precautions set out by [Transport Canada](#).

Illness Policies for Campers and Staff

Ensure the camp has flexible sick-leave and absence policies that encourage staff to stay home instead of 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 encourage families to keep their children who are ill home.

Under changes to the *Employment Standards Act*, staff who are ill are entitled to up to three days of paid leave (between May 20, 2021 and December 31, 2021) if they are unable to work for various COVID-19 related reasons. For more information visit this [webpage](#).

Stay Home if Sick or When Required to Self-Isolate

Camp operators should ensure that staff, campers or other people know they must stay home and not enter the camp if they are sick or required to self-isolate. The following campers, staff or visitors must stay home and self-isolate as per public health direction:

- A person confirmed by lab test and public health as a case of COVID-19;
- A person confirmed by public health as a close contact of a confirmed case or linked to an outbreak of COVID-19; and
- A person who has recently entered the country from abroad or travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days.

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

Daily Health Check

Camp operators should require everyone to do a daily health check before they enter the camp. 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.

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

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness. Everyone should practice diligent hand hygiene. To learn about how to perform hand hygiene using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, refer to the BCCDC's [webpage](#).

Everyone should:

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

When Someone Becomes Sick at Camp

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

Steps to take when someone at camp is ill:

- If a camper or non-resident staff member develops symptoms such as cough, fever, chills, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell that are unrelated to pre-existing conditions such as asthma 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 two metres from others if a separate room is not available. The staff member should remain at least two metres away from the camper. A mask should be worn by both the camper (if tolerated) and the staff person.
- The affected individual should go home, if possible, self-isolate and contact 8-1-1 or use the online [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to see if a COVID-19 test is recommended. If they need to take a test and their test result is negative, they can return to camp once symptoms are resolved. If the test result 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 symptom such as cough, fever, chills, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, that are unrelated to pre-existing conditions such as asthma, 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 residence outside of camp 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 with rapidly deteriorating symptoms or is in medical distress should be seen by medical personnel as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.

Masks

Staff are required to follow [WorkSafeBC policies and protocols on communicable disease prevention measures](#), including the use of masks in settings that are identified by camp operators.

Public health guidance on mask use is:

- Masks are recommended for indoor public spaces for individuals over 12 years of age who are not fully immunized
- Masks optional for children aged 2-12
- Children under 2 should not wear masks

Camps are permitted to enact their own more rigid mask wearing policies if deemed appropriate for their site, program and circumstances. Wearing a mask is a personal choice. Masks help to reduce droplet transmission from the wearer to the outside environment. If campers wish to wear masks more often than required, they should be allowed to.