

****Details regarding COVID-19 are very situational and evolving. This info will be updated regularly and is subject to change****

UPDATE: MARCH 30, 2020

QUESTIONS RELATED TO TRAVEL, EXPOSURE AND SELF-ISOLATION

1. *UPDATED* I think I may have had exposure to COVID-19. What should I do?

If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, you need to contact 8-1-1, or your qualified primary care provider and follow the directions you are provided by those sources. When calling 8-1-1, you must identify yourself as healthcare employee working at Island Health. If you are instructed by a qualified primary care provider to self-isolate at home, contact your leader immediately to determine whether a work from home/remote working arrangement can be established or you will be on paid general leave.

If we practice infection prevention and control practices the risk to workers remains low. Whenever Island Health confirms a positive case of COVID-19 within our facilities (or places of work in the community), a risk assessment is completed to ensure staff were not exposed. This is an established process that has public health, the medical health officer, and Infection Prevention and Control working together with Occupational Health and Safety. In these circumstances, you will be provided with directions on what to do, and someone will be in contact with you.

2. *UPDATED* I have just returned from international travel. Am I expected to come to work?

Due to the essential nature of health care services, and recognizing that all Health Authority employees have the education and training to provide or support direct patient care, Health Authority employees (including paramedics) who return from international travel after March 12, 2020, and who are not experiencing any symptoms, should attend work. The exceptions to this is if you have received specific direction from senior leadership to not attend work; have been advised by your primary care provider to self-isolate due to your recent international travel; or returning from Iran, Italy or Hubei province which requires a 14 day self isolation.

If you have returned from travel outside Canada, please take the following precautions while working:

- Self-monitor daily for signs and symptoms of illness;
- Wear a surgical mask at all times and in all areas of your workplace;
- Follow infection prevention and control protocols including diligent hand hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment when delivering patient care;
- Reduce close contact with other health care workers and avoid shared spaces where possible;
- Avoid close contact with others when travelling to and from work and between shifts; and
- Self-isolate at home on days when not required at work.

Employees who are required to self-isolate and are asymptomatic may have a work from home arrangement. The parameters for working from home are outlined in the [COVID-19 Response Plan Non-Clinical Staff: Working from Home](#)

3. I think I have regular flu-like symptoms or am unwell. What should I do?

Employees with flu-like symptoms should not be at work, but should recuperate at home on sick leave. This allows you to get well and protects staff and patients. If you are instructed by your qualified primary care provider or by direction from 8-1-1 to observe a period of self-isolation, you will be provided with further instruction regarding when you should return to work. If you have not been directed to self-isolate, you will return to work when symptoms cease. If COVID-19 is suspected or confirmed as the

reason for illness, you will need to self-isolate in accordance with direction provided by your primary care provider.

4. I am living in the same residence as someone who has recently travelled. Should I come to work?

Given that you are healthy and asymptomatic (not showing symptoms), you are required to report to work.

5. I haven't travelled. Can I self isolate at my own discretion?

No. Unless you have been directed to self-isolate by a qualified primary care provider, or are actively seeking assessment about COVID-19.

6. I recently returned from vacation and was asked to digitally sign at the border and airport saying that I will self-isolate for 14 days. My Leader has told me that if I don't have symptoms, I need to come into work. What should I do?

While border services has certain protocols in place for the general public, Dr. Bonnie Henry, the Provincial Medical Health Officer, has provided enhanced instruction specific to the health authorities regarding the requirements to return to work. If you are needed in your area to support or provide patient care, your leader will assess and provide direction on the details pertaining to your return.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO EXPOSURE AND SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE

7. *NEW* What do I do if I receive a positive COVID-19 test result?

If you are a member of Island Health staff or medical staff with a positive COVID-19 test result, you will be contacted by a nurse from our Communicable Disease program within Public Health, who will investigate where and when you worked, and help determine others you may have had close contact with. Occupational Health and Safety will work with your leader to identify specifically what shifts you worked, and if others might have been exposed. You will be asked to isolate for a further 10 days from onset of symptoms. However if you have symptoms indicating you are still sick with an illness other than COVID-19, you should remain isolated at home until symptoms cease. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-isolate for more than 10 days.

8. *NEW* What do I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms but have not been tested?

If you have COVID-19 symptoms, but were not tested after 10 days from symptom onset, if your temperature is normal and you feel better, you can return to work. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean you need to continue to self-isolate for more than 10 days. However if you have symptoms indicating you are still sick with an illness other than COVID-19, you should remain isolated at home until symptoms cease.

9. *NEW* What do I do if I get a negative COVID-19 test result?

If you are sent for COVID-19 testing and the result is negative and you are ill, you should stay at home until symptoms cease then return to work and continue to monitor for signs and symptoms. Changes or worsening may indicate the need for another test. If symptoms start in the workplace you are required to mask up, finish the essential work, and talk with your leader about replacement before going home.

10. *NEW* I am a healthcare worker living with someone in my household that is symptomatic for COVID-19. What should I do?

Healthcare workers that have a COVID-19 symptomatic household member can safely attend work. Healthcare workers working in patient care areas are to wear a surgical mask during their shift. The mask can be **donned at the beginning of the shift and can be worn throughout the entire shift** as long as it is not visibly soiled, damp, damaged or hard to breathe/see through; it does not need to be changed between patients. If you feel ill at work let your supervisor know and discuss whether you need to go home to self isolate.

11. I am providing care at a site where many patients/clients are presenting with potential symptoms of COVID-19. Am I safe to go to work?

Island Health takes illness prevention and safety very seriously. We are taking active steps to improve measures where possible including promoting and posting signage for hand hygiene practices for employees, volunteers, patients and visitors; making available appropriate personal protective equipment; signage for proper cough/sneeze etiquette, etc.; ensuring that employees with flu-like symptoms do not come to work; reminding employees to continue to self-monitor for flu-like symptoms; limiting only essential visitors to our sites and addressing any relevant facility concerns, such as ensuring adequate hand washing and drying supplies, etc.

12. *UPDATED* It has been confirmed that I was exposed to COVID-19 while I was at work. What do I do?

If you have a confirmed exposure to COVID-19 while at work, you will be directed by your manager to contact the Provincial Workplace Health Call Centre: 1-866-922-9464. If you contracted COVID-19 in the workplace, Island Health will work closely with WorkSafeBC to make sure that your claim can be properly adjudicated. In the interim, you will be placed on sick leave while in isolation.

13. I have recently had a patient/client that I was providing care to that tested positive for COVID-19. Do I have to return to work?

When a client/patient/resident tests positive for COVID-19, public health officials will be actively involved. If you are deemed by a qualified medical professional to be at risk, you will be provided instructions. If you are instructed to self-isolate, you will be placed on a paid general leave. If you are asymptomatic and not instructed to self-isolate, you are expected to attend work and follow the directions provided in question #2, in the questions related to Travel, Exposure and Self-Isolation section.

14. *NEW* Do I have the right to refuse unsafe work if you can't guarantee that COVID-19 is in the workplace?

All workers have the Right to Refuse Unsafe Work and Island Health has a process, recognized by WorkSafeBC, to address these concerns. If you have an issue, first speak with your supervisor/leader to express your concerns. If this does not resolve the matter(s), and you choose to exercise your right to refuse, the process for doing so is located on the "Refusal of Unsafe Work" page on the Island Health Intranet (<https://intranet.viha.ca/safety/reporting/Pages/refusal-unsafe-work.aspx>).

All staff must adhere to social/physical distancing requirements and appropriate hygiene practices (e.g. hand washing). This includes interactions with co-workers and others. Where social distancing cannot always be achieved during certain care provider/patient interactions, Island Health is working with the province to ensure that personal protective equipment (PPE) is made available. It is imperative that

staff use this equipment only when necessary and as prescribed by the Provincial Health Officer and our own Medical Health Officers. This will ensure that it continues to be available for those that require it.

All of the work done in Island Health is valued and safety is considered in each decision. If you are unsure how to apply some of the direction around social distancing in your role, please speak to your Manager.

15. NEW I'm concerned about social and physical distancing at work. People aren't observing the appropriate social and physical distance. What should I do?

Social/physical distancing has recently become an integral part of ensuring a safe workplace. Island Health expects all staff to participate in social/physical distancing in the workplace.

We want to encourage employees to be ambassadors in the moment, so please speak respectfully to your colleagues if you have a concern. You can also speak to your leader if you have concerns about social and physical distancing at work.

16. NEW What do I do if my colleagues comes to work sick?

We are taking the clean hands, warm hearts approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, we're all in this together. If one of your colleagues appears unwell, you can speak to them directly to see if they're okay. If, after talking to your colleague, you still have concerns, speak to your leader.

17. NEW Do we know the effects of COVID-19 on those who are pregnant or breastfeeding and fetal or newborn health?

The BC Centre for Disease Control has advised the following for pregnant people:

- Pregnant women are not at more risk of acquiring SARS CoV2, nor at more risk of getting severe disease than comparable aged adults.
- Pregnant employees who are not working in essential services or health care should socially isolate like all members of the community
- Pregnant employees in health care settings can continue to work if asymptomatic and not had a recent COVID-19 contact. They should use PPE precautions as appropriate for their work environment.

Additional information from the BC Centre for Disease Control on the clinical care of pregnant persons during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/clinical-care/pregnancy>

18. NEW Are pregnant hospital front line staff able to work in another capacity?

If you are practicing good hand hygiene, following infection prevention and control protocols and using the right PPE you are taking all precautions available. Should you require consideration for temporary accommodated arrangements such as deployment, please first contact your leader and then your Disability Management Consultant if required.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO LEAVES AND PAY

19. Will my leader need a sick note from a physician if I am unwell?

In order to avoid unnecessary utilization of your primary care physician, a sick note will not be requested for employees with a short-term illness such as the flu.

20. UPDATED I have been instructed by a healthcare professional (qualified primary care provider or 8-1-1) to self-isolate. Will I be paid?

If you are asymptomatic, you will be paid through general leave with pay or in accordance with your collective agreement. If you have any kind of symptoms (cold, flu, of COVID-19, etc), you will be placed on sick leave.

- a. FOR CASUAL STATUS: If you have been instructed by a qualified primary care provider to self-isolate, you will be paid for previously scheduled shifts during the isolated period.
- b. FOR REGULAR STATUS: If you have been instructed by a qualified primary care provider to self-isolate, you will be placed on general leave with pay.

21. UPDATED I am off on sick leave related to COVID-19 and I am out of paid sick leave. What are my options?

If you are sick, you will be coded to unpaid sick. You may be eligible for sick leave benefits through the Federal Employment Insurance program or you can request to have your unpaid sick leave coded to paid vacation leave. If available, you can request to have your OT bank paid out at any time in the calendar year.

22. UPDATED I am currently away from work while waiting on COVID-19 results. Will I be paid?

If you are asymptomatic, you will be paid through general leave with pay or in accordance with your collective agreement.

23. UPDATED I have an underlying health condition, should I come to work?

The only person fully able to assess and determine whether you should be at work is your primary care physician. If you are practicing good hand hygiene, following infection prevention and control protocols and using the right PPE you are taking all precautions available. Should you have an underlying health condition that may require consideration for temporary accommodated arrangements such as deployment or temporary remote work arrangements, please contact your leader or a Disability Management Consultant.

24. UPDATED Someone in my household has an underlying health condition and is at a higher risk for serious illness due to COVID-19 should they be exposed. Should I come to work?

Yes. Staff who have a family member in their household with an underlying health condition can work safely if they follow infection prevention and control processes, helping ensure staff do not bring illnesses home with them.

25. UPDATED I have recently returned from the Hubei Province in China, Iran or Italy, but am asymptomatic, how will I be paid?

You will be placed on general leave with pay for the duration of the self-isolation (14 days) if a work from home arrangement cannot be found.

26. UPDATED While I was self-isolating I developed COVID-19 symptoms. How will my leave be coded?

Should you become sick during your self-isolation, you will be coded to sick leave. Please advise your leader if you develop symptoms during self-isolation so your leave coding can be adjusted.

27. *NEW* I want to cancel my upcoming 2020 vacation and I want to it to be paid out instead. Can I do this?

Employees who are actively working (not on an approved leave) cannot request a vacation payout of their 2020 vacation bank.

28. I am a non-contract employee who has some left over 2019 vacation that per the Non-Contract Terms and Conditions needs to be used by March 31, 2020 or else it will be deleted. Given the current situation, I will not be able to take my 2019 vacation days before March 31st. Will I just lose those vacation days?

Your bank will not be deleted and you will have access to those vacation hours until December 31, 2020.

29. Due to the pandemic, my family is in a place of financial hardship, what are my options?

The federal government has announced new measures to support Canadians through Canada's *COVID-19 Economic Response Plan*. Please review the information on the [Government of Canada's website](#) regularly for new information about how to access financial supports.

30. I have a family member that requires care due to COVID-19. Is there a paid leave I can access?

Depending on the collective agreement or terms and conditions, you may be eligible for a leave to support the care of a family member. Speak to your leader.

31. I am currently out of the country and am unable to get back to Canada. What are my options for pay?

Please contact your leader directly to discuss. You may be able to utilize your vacation and overtime banks, otherwise you will be placed on unpaid leave.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

32. I am in self-isolation and struggling. What supports are available?

Our Employee & Family Assistance Program, Homewood Health, is there to provide support as we navigate the personal and collective impacts of this pandemic. Mental and emotional support is critical at this point in time, especially with increasing numbers of our community members in self-isolation. Homewood's services can be accessed by calling 1-800-663-1142 or online at [homeweb.ca](#).

Psychological safety advisors who are part of the Occupational Health & Safety Team are available to provide check-ins with staff who are self-isolating. While they are not counsellors or psychologists, they can provide information and referral services as well as support connecting with resources that may be of benefit while dealing with the impacts of COVID-19 and self-isolation. Check-ins will be provided at the request of the employee – email: pathogen@viha.ca.

33. *NEW* Can my work schedule be changed?

Yes. There are provisions in each of the collective agreements to change the work schedules. Overtime may apply and the notice period requirements for changes to employee schedules differ in each collective agreement.

34. *NEW* Will my FTE and hours of work continue?

Yes. In areas where it is possible that you could be redeployed to support patient care needs. When an employee reports to work, every effort will be made to redeploy the employee for their full shift.

35. *NEW* Is it possible that I could be redeployed during a pandemic or disaster?

Yes. As the scope and scale of the pandemic unfolds, our success at providing health services while containing the effect of the pandemic will be dependent upon extraordinary efforts by all those who work within our health system.

It is possible that certain departments and services may experience surges in demand for health services while other areas may experience a decrease in need for services. In either case, Island Health emergency planners may need to supplement current staffing levels by redeploying staff and leaders to high priority health services. We will endeavor to deploy you to work for which you are qualified and capable of performing, and also provide any additional training that may be required.

36. Why do Health Authority employees have different direction about coming to work than other industries? What makes the Health Authority different?

The goal of our Pandemic Response Plan is to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the general public. In Pandemic times, we enact a call to action for healthcare workers to help the rest of our citizens make their way through the pandemic. We play a critical role in caring for the rest of our population; therefore, the benefit of having our teams at work is greater than the risk of keeping us at home.

37. I have decided to cancel my upcoming vacation plans. Can I cancel my vacation leave and come to work instead?

Yes. Please work with your leader to work out details, as our goal will be to maximize the number of employees in our system (from March 12 through April 30).

38. I want to stay updated about COVID-19. What is the best source of information?

The [COVID-19](#) Intranet page for Island Health is being constantly updated and we recommend starting there. You can also access the following websites for more information:

- [BC Centre for Disease Control](#)
- [BC Government](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)

39. I have not been directed to self-isolate but I would like to work from home. Is this possible?

Employees who are in direct patient care roles are expected to come to work. Your leader will be considering requests to work from home should it be feasible for your role and operationally possible. Please contact your leader.

40. Why are my colleagues, who have chosen to travel or who have been instructed to self-isolate, being paid?

Employees who have been instructed to self-isolate have done so at the direction of their primary care physician or 8-1-1. Please refer to questions 11 and 15. Federal, provincial and Health Authority direction is clear that all members of the public, including healthcare workers are not to travel outside Canada. If you choose to not heed the government's mandate and travel or attend gatherings of 50 or

more locally or otherwise, you will be required per the *Public Health Act* order issued by Dr. Bonnie Henry to self-isolate and you will be placed on unpaid leave for the 14-day isolation period.

41. There are elements of my job that I can do from home - can I work remotely?

Island Health is exploring all possibilities for alternative work arrangements at this time. Examples of alternative working arrangements may include being deployed to a different site or working from home. Where possible, if an employee can do their work or a portion of their work remotely, they should be encouraged to do so. You **MUST** speak directly to your leader who will determine if you are eligible to work remotely and will provide approval.

Please keep visiting the [COVID-19 Island Health intranet](#) page for details.

42. I have symptoms of COVID-19 and I have not been able to get through to 8-1-1 to inquire about testing. What should I do?

Please continue to attempt to contact 8-1-1. If you are still unable to get through to 8-1-1, please contact your primary care practitioner to book an appointment to be tested.

43. I have called 8-1-1 and they have directed me to self-isolate for 14 days based on my symptoms, what should I do?

When calling 8-1-1 you must identify yourself as healthcare employee working at Island Health. If you have been directed to self-isolate by a qualified primary care provider (either from 8-1-1 or your primary care provider), please advise your leader immediately and follow the self-isolation protocol.

44. UPDATED I have exhausted all my options for child care. Is there any assistance available to me?

Work is underway across the health authority to identify staff facing child care challenges. Our partners in the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Family Development have been working diligently on addressing this issue, with an immediate focus on providing urgent childcare for the week of March 30.

For the week of March 30th, if there are urgent situations where front-line health care workers require care for their children, we are asking those parents to take the following steps based on the age of their children:

- School-Aged Children (K-6): contact their school principals (public and independent) as soon as possible to determine how best to meet the need for urgent child care beginning the week of March 30th. Principals will be available over the weekend for this purpose.
- Children aged 0-5 (Pre K): contact child care providers that operate on school grounds to see if they have capacity, or call their local Childcare Resource and Referral (CCRR) Centre and they will work to match front-line health care workers with a child care provider that have available space. More information can be found on the Childcare for Healthcare Workers webpage.

45. NEW Are there plans to increase Island Health staffing levels?

Island Health has implemented a Rapid Recruitment process to address staffing needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are actively recruiting applicants to all positions within the Health Authority. If you know of anyone who may be interested, please have them send their application to talentacquisition@viha.ca