



# COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is COVID-19, and what are the symptoms for it?**

COVID-19 is a virus that can cause respiratory illness in people ranging from a common cold to pneumonia. Common symptoms include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough and difficulty breathing.

### **Who can I talk to if I think I have symptoms of COVID-19?**

Both Alberta and British Columbia have released self-assessment tools. You can find them at the links below. If you think you have symptoms or have recently travelled, please complete the assessment and follow their direction.

Alberta: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>

British Columbia: <https://covid19.thrive.health/>

### **Are you limiting visitors and volunteers at your care homes, group homes or programs?**

In light of concerns surrounding the spread of Coronavirus Disease (**COVID-19**), Good Samaritan would like to assure residents, families and loved ones that we are taking appropriate measures to protect our residents, clients, employees and volunteers. As such, we will be limiting visitors to our care homes to essential only.

**At this time, we will also not be allowing volunteers to enter the care home.**

### **What is an essential visitor?**

In British Columbia, essential visits will be limited to only those residents receiving compassionate care (for example, those that are at the end of life or enduring a critical illness). Visitation for compassionate care reasons will still be limited to one person, and they will need to pass screening beforehand.

In Alberta, a designated essential visitor is someone who is required to assist in carrying out the quality of life or care related activities that our employees are unable to provide.

## **Am I able to visit with my loved outdoors?**

In British Columbia, the Provincial Health Officer is not yet allowing visits except for compassionate care reasons only.

In Alberta, outside visiting between the designated essential visitor, a resident and one other person is permitted. However, there are several stipulations for outdoor visits to occur that are important for you to know:

- Visits must be pre-arranged and scheduled with the care homes;
- Visits can have a maximum of three people – the resident, the person deemed a designated essential visitor, and one other;
- Outdoor visits must practice social distancing (everyone must be a minimum of six feet away from one another);
- Everyone involved with outdoor visits must wear masks continuously;
- Visitors are responsible for bringing their own masks;
- Visitors must remain outside and cannot enter the building;
- A resident who is in isolation cannot participate in outdoor visits;
- Visits are dependent on staff availability;
- If the outdoor space can only be accessed from within the building, it is only the essential visitor who will be allowed. The essential visitor will need to undergo complete screening and instruction on the proper use of personal protective equipment; and
- Visitors will not be permitted if we have a COVID-19 or any other outbreak.

## **What sort of screening protocols are in place for visitors?**

We have implemented screening protocols for anyone coming into the care homes. Risk assessment tools are used for all essential visitors. Screenings are also being conducted on employees, contractors and physicians. The full essential visitor questionnaire is available at <https://gss.org/visitation-protocols/>

## **Are there other ways to get messages to my loved one if I am unable to visit?**

Yes! We highly encourage you to send a message to your loved one in our care homes and group homes through our Well-Wishes tool on our website. Visit <https://gss.org/well-wishes/> and find the well-wishes tab on the top menu or under the “contact” tab.

Well-wishes are hand delivered by employees to residents/clients in the afternoon. Messages received after 1 p.m., on weekends, or statutory holidays will be delivered the next business day. We've now updated our tool so you can send photos to your loved one as well!

Please note that this tool is only to be used for well-wishes; any other type of communication or messages (emails conducting personal business, containing questionable content, or solicitations) will not be delivered and will be deleted from the system.

## **Are you restricting residents from leaving your group/care homes?**

We know that COVID-19 transmission is significant in the community setting; therefore, we strongly encourage our individuals/residents to remain at home and to not venture into the community. We are getting directions from regional health authorities that resident/client movement outside or off care/group home property is being discouraged unless there is an urgent medical need that needs to be addressed.

Social distancing requirements must be followed throughout Good Samaritan properties, and residents must undergo the health screening assessment upon re-entry. Individuals/residents need to be informed that re-admittance may not be guaranteed. Any resident/client wishing to have an extended leave needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

## **Will recreation programming be continuing at the care homes and group homes?**

We understand how important recreation is to those we care for. However, in the best interest of protecting them, we have limited recreation activities as follows:

- All external activities are cancelled.
- All recreation that is facilitated by an external person is postponed for the foreseeable future.
- All recreation will be conducted by Good Samaritan employees.
- Large groups will be broken into smaller ones for recreation activities.

Please note, that in the event of any influenza-like outbreak, all recreation would be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

## **How is Good Samaritan preparing for COVID-19?**

- We have several infection prevention control (IPC) persons on staff who are closely monitoring the situation and taking direction from public health and the regional health authorities.
- Our Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is currently active and is meeting extensively.
- All care homes and head office are conducting pandemic planning, including the following:
  - Various internal policies and procedures are in place if there is an outbreak, and all care homes/group homes have binders that guide them through our protocols.
  - All care homes have an infection control designate in place as well as an occupational health and safety committee.

- Necessary staff are trained in how to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and when to use it. PPE includes medical masks, protective eyewear and gowns.
- We are in constant contact with our suppliers and are reviewing our inventories when it comes to PPE, non-perishable goods and medical supplies. We are working proactively to maintain a robust supply.
- All esthetic services (e.g. hair dressers) are closed for the foreseeable future.
- Staff are being screened at their beginning of their shifts.
- We are limiting visitors to essential only.
- At this time we have decided to stop volunteering at our care homes.
- Social/physical distancing is enacted at all of our care homes wherever possible.

These are only a few of the ways that we are preparing. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the site manager or team leader at your care/group home.

## **What would Good Samaritan do if there was a case of COVID-19 at one of your locations?**

We would follow our current outbreak protocols, which includes:

- Enhancing staffing where possible to assist with increased environmental cleaning and disinfection of high touch surfaces.
- Cancelling recreation group activities on a case-by-case basis.
- Limiting the movement of residents who are ill during the duration of their illness and placing precaution signs on their doors.
- Placing outbreak carts and signs outside all ill residents' rooms that are stocked with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Gloves, gowns, eyewear and masks would be worn when providing care to ill residents as determined by the point of care risk assessment and policy.
- A thorough, enhanced cleaning of the affected area would take place after an outbreak.

We would also work closely with public health and the health authorities until the outbreak was resolved while communicating with residents, families, and employees.

## **What can you do to help us prepare?**

- Continue to practice good hand hygiene for yourself and residents/clients and avoid touching your face with unclean hands.
- Please stay home if you are unwell, to prevent the spread of ANY illness.
- If you have been travelling and feel unwell, please self-quarantine and contact public health (dial 811 in Alberta or British Columbia) and follow their direction.
- If you have COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), please stay home and contact health link (811) for direction.
- Think of alternative ways to greet other people that doesn't involve shaking hands – this could include elbow bumps or waving.
- Utilize our "[well-wishes](#)" function on our website to send personal messages to your loved ones.

## How can you protect yourself and your loved ones?

To reduce the spread of **ANY** infectious illnesses, including COVID-19, you should follow the usual health precautions:

- Wash your hands when you are coming into and leaving the care home and the resident's room
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Cover your cough/sneeze with a tissue or sleeve instead of your hands
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Please practice social distancing, which is a conscious effort to reduce close contact between people and hopefully stymie community transmission of the COVID-19 virus.

## Where can you find more information on COVID-19?

### Alberta

Government of Alberta: [www.alberta.ca/coronavirus](http://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus)

Alberta Health Services: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>

Health Link: call 811

### British Columbia

BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC): [http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-\(novel\)](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/coronavirus-(novel))

BC Government: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/pandemic-influenza>

Health Link: call 811

## Who can I contact if I have more questions about Good Samaritan's reponse to COVID-19?

You can email us at [goodsaminfo@gss.org](mailto:goodsaminfo@gss.org) or call 780-431-3600 (or toll free 1-877-437-3600).

We are also sharing information on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).