

# FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

March 23, 2020

## To All BC First Nations and Tribal Councils

Dear FN Community Leaders:

### Re: State of Emergency in First Nation Communities

The First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) recognizes the inherent jurisdiction and self-determination of First Nations with regard to their lands and their peoples, and is encouraging all Nations to declare a State of Emergency as soon as possible in their communities. This follows the national State of Emergency in respect to the COVID-19 pandemic declared by the Assembly of First Nations on March 21, 2020, as well as the provincial government, and many municipal governments in BC.

The FNLC supports those First Nations that have already declared their own State of Emergency in their own communities and instituted travel restrictions in order to safeguard their citizens.

For other communities that may wish to set up their own community travel restrictions and public alerts, a template notice is attached that may be tailored to your specific community requirements.

The FNLC also strongly recommends all First Nation communities adhere to all measures put forth by public health authorities and the First Nations Health Authority to stop the spread of COVID-19 and take extreme precautionary measures to maintain health and safety in their communities. Information sheets developed by the First Nations Health Authority on community and individual protection measures are attached.

It is incumbent upon us all to **act now and take all necessary measures to ensure strict social (physical) distancing** immediately. We strongly support the recent advice from the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA), First Nations Health Council and First Nations Health Directors Association that all communities cancel or postpone all cultural, community or social gatherings, meetings and events.

Community leaders must immediately work to educate all our citizens - especially the youth - so they learn and understand the significant risks associated with COVID-19. Further, leaders are encouraged to involve and inform the whole community in efforts to prevent the spread of the virus. The FNLC and FNHA will continue to provide relevant and updated information to be shared with your community members and leaders.

With services, restaurants and bars closed, it is imperative that communities avoid gathering in any form until the pandemic is done. Our communities are small, interconnected and very social and, so, we recognize the significant challenges of physical distancing. However, COVID-19 presents challenges requiring fast and extreme measures and we must be vigilant in ensuring that we keep the virus out of our communities. The only way we can do this is to act now and not be physically close to others, aside from the people in your immediate household.



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The FNLC further recommends that community members uphold principles such as “securing only what one needs,” with respect to attaining essential goods such as food and supplies. We must continue to support and look out for our neighbours, family and friends.

The FNHA is a key source for COVID-19 related information for First Nations in BC. The FNHA has activated its Public Health Response Team and is constantly monitoring and reacting to updated COVID-19 information, and regularly updating its website. The FNHA also has a Communicable Disease Emergency Response Plan template for communities to utilize.

**For detailed information on COVID-19 and impacts for First Nations, please visit the FNHA for daily updates: <https://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus>.**

Other sites for First Nations are the BC Ministry of Health COVID-19 Information page: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-feature/coronavirus-disease-covid-19> and BC Centre for Disease Control: <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>.


Additionally, regular updates are being sent to First Nations via email from Indigenous Services Canada and via RDG Catherine Lappe on Twitter: [@Catherine\\_RDGBC](https://twitter.com/Catherine_RDGBC).

For non-health related questions and requests to ISC during this time, please email: [aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca](mailto:aadnc.iscbccovid19.aandc@canada.ca) This will help ensure all requests are tracked and responded to promptly.

In this unprecedented global emergency, we all need to do our part to protect our Nations and our most precious assets, our citizens.

Respectfully,  
**FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

**On behalf of the FIRST NATIONS SUMMIT**

  
Cheryl Casimer

  
Robert Phillips

  
Lydia Hwitsum

**On behalf of the UNION OF BC INDIAN CHIEFS**

  
Grand Chief Stewart Phillip

  
Chief Don Tom

  
Kukpi7 Judy Wilson

**On behalf of the BC ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS:**

  
Regional Chief Terry Teegee

Attachments (6)    **TEMPLATE – LOCAL FIRST NATION STATE OF EMERGENCY PUBLIC ALERT / TRAVEL LIMITATION NOTICE**

*FNHA Information Sheet: FNHA Advises Communities to Prepare for Possible Spread of Coronavirus -- Important Steps for Communities to Take*

*FNHA Information Sheet: Protect Yourself From COVID-19 (caused by novel coronavirus) -- Each of us plays a role in protecting our communities and loved ones. Follow these tips to prevent COVID-19 and stop the spread of germs!*

*FNHA Information Sheet: Prevent COVID-19(novel coronavirus) by Washing Your Hands*

*Government of Canada Information Sheet: KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: SELF-MONITORING, SELF-ISOLATION, AND ISOLATION FOR COVID-19*

*Media Release dated March 21, 2020 re: FNHA/FNHC/FNHDA Advise Against All Gatherings to Prevent COVID-19 Spreading*



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# FNHA Advises Communities to Prepare for Possible Spread of Coronavirus

## Important Steps for Communities to Take

**British Columbia's health system has a detailed plan in place should the coronavirus known as COVID-19 spread across the province.**

Bearing that in mind, please approach these preparations with calm in our hearts and trust in each other to avoid causing unnecessary anxiety in our communities.

**However, there are a number of steps First Nations communities can take now to prepare for the possibility the virus spreads more widely:**

- Review your existing Communicable Disease Emergency Plan (Pandemic Plan) and update it as needed. Make sure all of the contact information is correct and that people are aware of what is expected of them.
- Review the community's supply of essentials.
- Where there is one, check to see if the community health centre or nursing stations requires additional support to prepare for possible coronavirus patients.
- Train and prepare staff to cover for each other as people may need time off to care for their families or for themselves.
- Continue to follow the First Nations Health Authority communications channels for timely and reliable information on the outbreak.
- Involve the whole community in efforts to prevent the spread of the virus by sharing tips on how to prevent its spread, as well as how to recognize the symptoms in each other.

**Band offices and other community organizations should consider taking the following measures to prevent the virus spreading in the workplace.**

- Promote frequent hand washing with soap and water, use hand sanitizer.
- Frequent cleaning and sanitizing of door handles, washrooms and surfaces that are frequently touched is important.
- Recommend people sneeze and cough into a tissue or their elbow.
- Encourage people to stay home if they are sick.
- Where possible, allow and enable people to work from home.

**Finally, take a look at the community's financial planning and consider budget implications should emergency funds be needed.**

**The FNHA will provide further updates as the situation evolves.**

**For all the latest information please go to:**

**[www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus](http://www.fnha.ca/about/news-and-events/news/information-on-novel-coronavirus)**



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# Protect Yourself From COVID-19 (caused by novel coronavirus)

Each of us plays a role in protecting our communities and loved ones. Follow these tips to prevent COVID-19 and stop the spread of germs!

- Remember to wash your hands frequently with soap and water, and encourage others to do the same. If you can't wash your hands, then use hand sanitizer.
- Try to avoid touching your face.
- Frequently clean and sanitize door handles, washrooms and surfaces that are touched often.
- Recommend that people sneeze and cough into a tissue or their elbow.
- You may be used to greeting friends, family and colleagues with a hug or a handshake, but make bumping elbows the new greeting for now.
- Make sure to wash your hands before and after eating, and don't share plates or utensils with others.
- If you are not feeling well, please stay home from work or work from home. This will keep those around you safer.
- Limit unnecessary travel and avoid gathering with others unless necessary.
- If you have traveled out of the country, you should self-isolate for 14 days upon return.
- Masks are not effective at preventing infection, and may increase risks by causing people to touch their faces more often. Use a mask only if directed to by your health care provider.

**During this time, it is important to check in with yourself and others—if you aren't feeling 100%, it is better to stay home for now. Thank you for doing your part to keep your community safe!**

Learn more and get all COVID-19 updates at [www.fnha.ca/coronavirus](http://www.fnha.ca/coronavirus)



First Nations Health Authority  
Health through wellness

# Prevent COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) by Washing Your Hands

Wash your hands often to keep your community safe and healthy.



**1. Wet your hands.**



**2. Apply enough liquid soap to cover your hands.**



**3. Lather and scrub your whole hand, including the front, back and fingers - 20 seconds.**



**4. Rinse - 10 seconds.**



**5. Dry your hands with a paper towel.**



**6. Turn off tap with the paper towel.**

For more information: <https://www.fnha.ca/coronavirus>

# KNOW THE DIFFERENCE: SELF-MONITORING, SELF-ISOLATION, AND ISOLATION FOR COVID-19

## SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19



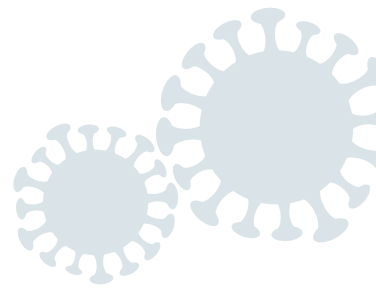
FEVER



COUGH



DIFFICULTY BREATHING



### SELF-MONITORING



You have:

- ▶ no symptoms

AND

- ▶ a history of possible exposure to the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, in the last 14 days

### SELF-ISOLATION

You have:

- ▶ no symptoms

AND

- ▶ a history of possible exposure to the novel coronavirus due to travel outside of Canada or close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19

### ISOLATION

You have:

- ▶ symptoms, even if mild

AND

- ▶ you have been **diagnosed with COVID-19** or are waiting for the results of a lab test for COVID-19



**SELF-MONITOR** means to:

- ▶ **monitor yourself** for 14 days for one or more symptoms of COVID-19
- ▶ go about your day but **avoid crowded places** and increase your personal space from others, whenever possible

**SELF-ISOLATE** means to:

- ▶ **stay at home** and monitor yourself for symptoms, even if mild, for 14 days
- ▶ **avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community in the event you become symptomatic

To be **ISOLATED** means to:

- ▶ **stay at home** until your Public Health Authority advises you that you are no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others
- ▶ **avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community, particularly people at high risk of severe illness outcomes such as older adults or medically vulnerable people



You need to **self-monitor** if:

- ▶ you have reason to believe you have been **exposed to a person** with COVID-19

OR

- ▶ you are in **close contact** with older adults or medically vulnerable people

OR

- ▶ you have **been advised to self-monitor** for any other reason by your Public Health Authority

**Self-isolate** if:

- ▶ you have travelled **outside of Canada** within the last 14 days

OR

- ▶ your Public Health Authority has identified you as a **close contact** of someone diagnosed with COVID-19

You need to **isolate** if:

- ▶ you have been **diagnosed** with COVID-19

OR

- ▶ you are **waiting to hear the results** of a laboratory test for COVID-19

OR

- ▶ you have been **advised to isolate at home** for any other reason by your Public Health Authority



If you develop symptoms, **isolate yourself from others immediately** and contact your **Public Health Authority** as soon as possible

If you develop symptoms, even if mild, **stay home, avoid other people** and contact your **Public Health Authority** as soon as possible

If your symptoms get worse, immediately contact your healthcare provider or **Public Health Authority** and **follow their instructions**

**WE CAN ALL DO OUR PART IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19. FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

1-833-784-4397

[@canada.ca/coronavirus](https://canada.ca/coronavirus)







## **FNHA/FNHC/FNHDA Advise Against All Gatherings to Prevent COVID-19 Spreading**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 21, 2020**

**COAST SALISH TERRITORY – VANCOUVER, BC** – The First Nations Health Authority, the First Nations Health Council and the First Nations Health Directors Association are strongly advising communities to cancel or postpone all community and cultural gatherings until the COVID-19 pandemic subsides.

With the increasing evidence about the rapid spread of COVID-19 in British Columbia, and on the advice of public health physicians, the First Nations Health Authority also strongly recommends against any unnecessary travel.

Furthermore, given the unprecedented risk COVID-19 presents, physical distancing is absolutely necessary to prevent serious illness and death in our communities. Please stay at least six feet apart from each other at all time. We are particularly concerned about the Elders and Knowledge Keepers, young children, and those with chronic disease. It is imperative that all of us take responsibility to care for each other by following this public health advice.

We do not make this recommendation lightly—we acknowledge the significance of cultural gatherings and events for First Nations communities, but from a public health standpoint we have the responsibility to communicate the severity of this rapidly evolving situation. Please cancel upcoming events, and reschedule for after this pandemic has passed.

### **Quotes:**

#### **Dr. Shannon McDonald, FNHA Deputy Chief Medical Officer:**

“COVID-19 is a severe respiratory disease that is very easy to transmit from person to person, and that can have deadly consequences. It is in our province and potentially in your community. It only takes one person to carry the disease to their family and community. Gatherings of any kind present an unreasonable risk.



We have a very brief opportunity to prevent the spread and the devastating consequences of this disease in our communities. Any gathering where close contact occurs can cause transmission and none of us are immune. I am especially worried about our Elders, young children and those with underlying health issues.”

**Colleen Erickson, FNHA Board Chair**

“The responsibility lies with each and every one of us to do everything possible to protect ourselves so in turn we protect our families, our elders and community. Especially our Elders who are the keepers of our oral history, language and age old wisdom.”

**Charlene Belleau, Chair, First Nations Health Council**

“The FNHC calls on Hereditary Chiefs, Matriarchs and Spiritual Leaders to help community leadership reinforce the critical public health advice to postpone cultural gatherings and large ceremonies. Please heed this critical advice – our spiritual teachings place our Elders and most vulnerable citizens at the forefront of our collective responsibilities to our Nations. During this time of self-isolation and social distancing (6-feet from each other), please use this time for prayer and self-reflection, stay safe and protect the health of you and your family.”

**Keith Marshall, President, First Nations Health Directors Association**

“We thank and acknowledge those working on the front lines to support community health, including the 150+ Health Directors in BC and our nurses and health professionals. We especially appreciate the work of Health Directors, Chiefs and health boards to ensure community health centres remain open for essential services in this crisis; and we encourage all Health Directors to practice self-care during this extraordinary time.”

**Learn more:**

Go to [www.fnha.ca/coronavirus](http://www.fnha.ca/coronavirus) for up-to-date information on COVID-19 and resources for you community.



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For more on this topic please see this article: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/covid-suspend-sweat-lodges-pipe-ceremonies-1.5504541>

To find out more about First Nations Health Authority, visit: <http://www.fnha.ca/>