

Supervisor's Guide to COVID-19 in the Workplace

Introduction

The *Supervisor's Guide to COVID-19 in the Workplace* provides a checklist of actions for common COVID-19 scenarios, links to relevant information and sample communication templates.

The Omicron variant and its high transmissibility and rapid community spread has changed many aspects of managing COVID-19. The provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry has asked all citizens to assume that they have COVID-19 if they have cold or flu-like symptoms similar to COVID-19 symptoms. If symptoms are manageable at home, testing is not needed. The BC Public Service has never required a positive test result or doctor's note confirming COVID-19 for an employee to access sick leave. Supervisors and managers should not be requesting PCR or rapid test results from staff.

Full vaccination for employees has also changed the way COVID-19 is managed from a health perspective. It has reduced self-isolation times and increased the use of health monitoring after an exposure. This may make some staff uneasy and clear communications with staff will help with this change in direction if there's a workplace exposure.

The same protocols that have protected us against all the other COVID-19 variants will provide protection against Omicron. Workplaces have multiple layers of protection that complement each other and help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Our workplaces and staff must be extra vigilant to ensure that safety protocols are always followed by staff members, clients and the general public alike. It is important that if a staff member has close contact in our workplaces with someone confirmed or presumed to be COVID-19 positive that we investigate and take corrective action to ensure that a similar close contact does not occur again.

List of Scenarios

1. [A staff member in the workplace is experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms](#)
2. [A staff member who has COVID-19 like symptoms or who is asymptomatic and tested positive for COVID-19 and is NOT at the workplace](#)
3. [An employee has a family or household member at home who has COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms](#)
4. [A client or member of the public in the workplace states they have COVID-19 or COVID-19 like symptoms](#)
5. [A client or member of the public who was recently in the workplace informs the workplace that they have COVID-19 or Covid-19 like symptoms](#)

[Sample Communications](#)

1. A staff member in the workplace is experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms

Dr. Henry, the Provincial Health Officer, has asked all citizens in BC to assume that they have COVID-19 if they have cold or flu-like symptoms, which are similar to COVID-19 symptoms. If an employee is feeling unwell they must leave the workplace immediately.

Action

Maintain physical distancing, wear masks, and meet with the staff in a private, large area. Discuss with the employee:

- The ill staff member must leave the workplace
- The ill staff member must wear a mask at all times while they're getting ready to leave and are transiting the workplace to go home
- Ask the employee where they have been working, who they may have had unmasked close (less than two metres) and prolonged contact (more than 15 mins) with and the work area they have been in.
- Suggest the employee use [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) for advice on next steps and testing, or call 811 for advice on managing their condition
- The employee can also use Part 3 of the FAQs to help manage their self isolation time
- Work with the employee on leave or if they are well enough to work, teleworking options for the time that they'll need to self isolate (this may be done later)
- Protect the privacy of the ill employee

Cleaning

Use the scenario that best applies in the MyHR [COVID-19 Exposure Control and Cleaning Protocols \(DOCX, 49KB\)](#) or your established ministry cleaning protocols.

Communications

If there was no close contact

- No communication is necessary since there is no risk of transmission to staff.
Consider using template #1 for general information to staff since the staff member will be absent from the workplace and people may wonder why, or the staff member may inform others that they are feeling unwell and leaving.

If there was a close contact

- Ask the unwell staff member if they would be comfortable notifying the people they were in close contact with.
- If the person is notifying the people they were in close contact with, proceed to the next step once that is completed, or next if the person will not be contacting others.
- Use template #2 as email or discussion guide and inform close contacts they should monitor their health. All staff including the close contacts can continue to attend the workplace.

Stay in contact with the ill staff member about a return-to-work date.

A staff member in the workplace is experiencing COVID-19-like symptoms (cont.)

Further actions if there was close contact:

- Review COVID-19 protocols and determine why there was close contact
- If required, update your Communicable Disease Prevention Plan to ensure close contact will not occur again. Contact Workplace Health and Safety using [AskMyHR](#) if you require assistance
- Review the COVID-19 protocols from the Communicable Disease Prevention Plan template with staff and discuss any new measures being implemented. Emphasize the importance of following the measures and for staff to identify times where close contact may occur and report it to their supervisor so protocols can be updated as necessary by the supervisor.

2. A staff member has COVID-19-like symptoms or is asymptomatic but tested positive for COVID-19 and is NOT at the workplace

The Provincial Health Officer has asked all citizens of British Columbia to assume they have COVID-19 if they have any cold or flu-like symptoms and stay home and self isolate. A positive test (rapid or PCR) is not required for the staff member to access STIIP.

Action

- Suggest the employee use the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) for advice on next steps and testing, or call 811 for advice on managing their condition
- The employee can use Part 3 of the FAQ's to help manage their health and isolation time
- Confirm with the employee the last day they were in the workplace
 - ✓ Was it more than 48 hours prior to them becoming symptomatic or their test date?If yes, there is no risk of exposure or close contact for the workplace
- If the person was in the workplace within 48 hours of becoming symptomatic or their test date:
 - ✓ Ask who they may have had close contact with, i.e. unmasked, close (less than two metres) and prolonged (more than 15 minutes)If there were no close contacts, there is no risk for staff

Communications

If there was no exposure or close contact

- No communication is necessary since there is no risk of transmission to staff. Consider using template #1 for general information to staff since the staff member will be absent from the workplace and people may wonder why, or the staff member may inform others that they are feeling unwell and leaving.

If there was a close contact

- Ask the unwell staff member if they would be comfortable notifying the people that they were in close contact with.
- If the person is notifying the people they were in close contact with, proceed to the next step once that is completed, or next if the person will not be contacting others
- Use template #2 as email or discussion guide and inform close contacts they should monitor their health. All staff including the close contacts can continue to attend the workplace.

Stay in contact with the ill staff member about a return-to-work date.

A staff member has COVID-19-like symptoms or is asymptomatic and tested positive for COVID-19 and is NOT at the workplace (cont.)

Cleaning

Use the scenarios that best apply in the MyHR [COVID-19 Exposure Control and Cleaning Protocols \(DOCX, 49KB\)](#) or your established ministry cleaning protocols.

Further actions if there was close contact:

- Review COVID-19 Protocols and determine why there was close contact
- If required, update your Communicable Disease Prevention Plan to ensure close contact will not occur again. Contact Workplace Health and Safety using [AskMyHR](#) if you require assistance
- Review the COVID-19 protocols from the Communicable Disease Prevention Plan template with staff and discuss any new measures being implemented. Emphasize the importance of following the measures and for staff to identify times where close contact may occur and report it to their supervisor so protocols can be updated as necessary by the supervisor.

3. An employee has a family or household member at home who has COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms

An employee has called in or is at the workplace reporting that they have a family or household member at home who has tested positive or has COVID-19-like symptoms. The staff member is feeling well and has no COVID-19-like symptoms.

The BC Centre for Disease Control has changed the self-isolation requirements for fully vaccinated individuals. Those in households or who are caregiving to a person ill with COVID-19-like symptoms are considered close contacts, but they only need to monitor their health. They do not need to self isolate.

As a supervisor you may wish to recommend that they check the BC Centre for Disease Control site for more information <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/self-isolation#Self-monitoring>

Action

- Protect the confidentiality of the employee
- The employee can attend the workplace, but they must monitor their health and follow all COVID-19 protocols in the workplace
- If the person is off work as a caregiver for someone with COVID-19-like symptoms stay in contact about a possible return to work date.

There is no need to notify staff, increase cleaning of the workplace or take any further action.

4. A client or member of the public in the workplace states they have COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms

A client or member of the public in the workplace informs staff that they have COVID-19 or are feeling unwell with COVID-19-like symptoms.

Action

- Keep staff behind barriers or two metres distanced and masked while interacting with the client
- Offer the client a mask if they are not wearing one
- Review alternative service delivery options such as phone or online service or request that they come back when feeling better
- Ask the person to leave the workplace while maintaining physical distancing and wearing a mask (if they will wear one)
- Determine if any staff had unmasked, close (less than two metres) and prolonged contact (more than 15 mins) with the ill client.

Cleaning

Use the scenario that best applies in the MyHR [COVID-19 Exposure Control and Cleaning Protocols \(DOCX, 49KB\)](#) or your established ministry cleaning protocols.

Communications

If there was no close contact

- No communication is necessary, but you may want to use template #1 for general information to staff

If there was a close contact

- Inform those that were in close contact using template #2 as email or discussion guide and inform them they should monitor their health. All staff including the close contacts can continue to attend the workplace

Further actions if there was close contact:

- Review COVID-19 Protocols and determine why there was close contact
- If required, update your Communicable Disease Prevention Plan to ensure close contact will not occur again. Contact Workplace Health and Safety using [AskMyHR](#) if you require assistance
- Review the COVID-19 protocols from the Communicable Disease Prevention Plan template with staff and discuss any new measures being implemented. Emphasize the importance of following the measures and for staff to identify times where close contact may occur and report it to their supervisor so protocols can be updated as necessary by the supervisor.

5. A client or member of the public who was recently in the workplace informs the workplace that they have COVID-19 or COVID-19-like symptoms

A client or member of the public was in the workplace recently and has informed the workplace that they are now COVID-19 positive or have COVID-19-like symptoms. Key to the workplace response in this type of situation is determining when the client or member of the public was last in the workplace and determining if there was any close contact between them and any employees.

Action

Review the date and time of client's interaction with staff:

- There is no exposure risk if the person was in the office more than 48 hours prior to symptom onset or positive test date if they were asymptomatic
- If the client's interaction with staff was less than 48 hours prior to being symptomatic or their test date, determine if there was close contact between the client and staff:
 - ✓ If there was a barrier between staff and the client; or
 - ✓ Staff were two meters away from the personThere was no close contact risk to staff.

Cleaning

If it has been less than 24 hours since the person was in the workplace arrange for a presumptive COVID-19 cleaning in client service area(s) where the person was.

Communications

If there was no exposure or close contact

- No communication is necessary, there is no risk of transmission

If there was a close contact

- Inform the those that were in close contact using template #2 as email or discussion guide and inform them they should monitor their health. All staff including the close contacts can continue to attend the workplace.

Further actions if there was close contact:

- Review COVID-19 protocols and determine why there was close contact
- If required, update your Communicable Disease Prevention Plan to ensure close contact will not occur again. Contact Workplace Health and Safety using [AskMyHR](#) if you require assistance
- Review the COVID-19 protocols from the Communicable Disease Prevention Plan template with staff and discuss any new measures being implemented. Emphasize the importance of following the measures and for staff to identify times where close contact may occur and report it to their supervisor so protocols can be updated as necessary by the supervisor.

Sample Communications

Sharing accurate information while maintaining employee privacy is paramount in any communication to your team. Communication always needs to be done in a calm and thoughtful manner. Do not share the sick employee's name or health information, even if the individual has disclosed their health status to others in the workplace. Follow the direction of any Public Health officials on communications. Provide information only to those that need it.

These communications should be directed at individuals that may have been in the area of the individual case on a sustained basis. Some adjustments to the sample emails may be needed to protect privacy.

Below are example messages that can be modified for your workplace.

Template #1

Personalize your support and concern for staff in the email introduction. Good two-way communications while we work through the pandemic will help us get through this together.

We understand that staff are concerned about a possible COVID-19 exposure {describe issue}. Based on a review of the situation and advice from workplace health and safety we have determined that there is a very low risk of exposure or transmission for COVID-19 for staff since there were no close contacts. Since routine cleaning has occurred since the {describe issue} there is no need for workplace closure or enhanced cleaning at this time.

The COVID-19 protocols in our workplace are designed to prevent transmission of COVID-19 from an ill person. Unless you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, there is no need to consult your doctor or get a COVID-19 test. Be aware of how you feel and contact your supervisor if you feel ill. All of us must not attend the workplace if we feel unwell and everyone can use the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to assess our health.

Experience has shown us that our workplace protocols are effective at minimizing the risk of transmission at the work site. These protocols help protect us even if a person in the workplace was COVID-19 positive. Omicron is more transmissible than previous variants of COVID-19 and we must all be vigilant in the workplace to ensure that our protocols are followed, that if any of us feel unwell we don't attend the worksite, or if we begin to feel unwell at work we leave immediately.

If you have any questions, please contact {provide who and how to contact}

Template 2

A phone call or in-person meeting with the close contact may be more effective than an email. Personalize your support and concern for staff in the email introduction.

Email or discussion points for close contacts

I/We have been informed there was someone presumed to have COVID-19 at our workplace {Explain a date range} and you may have been a close contact. Based on BC Centre for Disease Control materials you should monitor your health but can still attend the workplace and don't have to self-isolate. Information on when to self-monitor or when to isolate is available at the BC Centre for Disease Control [website](#). Unless you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, there is no need to consult your doctor or get a COVID-19 test. Be aware of how you feel and if we feel unwell you can use the [BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) to assess your health.

Experience has shown us that our workplace protocols are effective at minimizing the risk of transmission at the work site. These protocols help protect us even if a person in the workplace was COVID-19 positive. Omicron is more transmissible than previous variants of COVID-19, and we all must be vigilant in the workplace to ensure that safety protocols are followed. If any of us feel unwell we don't attend the worksite or if we begin to feel unwell at work we leave immediately.

If you have any questions please contact {provide who and how to contact}

Emails for all staff regarding cleaning

If you have determined the workplace must be closed for cleaning by the using the MyHR [COVID-19 Exposure Control and Cleaning Protocols \(DOCX, 49KB\)](#) provide all staff an update. Demonstrate your concern for transparency and support for employee well being. A phone call may be more effective than an email depending on the circumstance.

I/We am/are closing the office and sending everyone on site to work from home. We have been informed there was a presumptive COVID-19 positive case at our workplace. Out of an abundance of caution we have a presumptive COVID-19 cleaning scheduled for the areas where the ill person was located.

We expect the office to re-open to staff {and public} on {date}. We will meet, as a team {when and how} later today, to share information and answer questions.

In the meantime, unless you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, there is no need to consult your doctor or get a COVID-19 test. Please stay calm and bring your questions to our team meeting. I/We will answer all your questions as best we are able.

Experience has shown us that our workplace protocols are effective at minimizing the risk of transmission at the work site. These protocols help protect us even if a person in the workplace was COVID-19 positive. Omicron is more transmissible than previous variants of COVID-19, and we all must be vigilant in the workplace to ensure that safety protocols are followed. If any of us feel unwell we don't attend the worksite or if we begin to feel unwell at work we leave immediately.

Template 2 (cont)

If you have determined the workplace requires cleaning but does not require closing using the MyHR [COVID-19 Exposure Control and Cleaning Protocols \(DOCX, 49KB\)](#) provide all staff an update.

Demonstrate your concern for transparency and support for employee well being. A phone call may be more effective than an email depending on the circumstance.

We have been informed there was a presumptive COVID-19 positive case at our workplace. Out of an abundance of caution we have a presumptive COVID-19 cleaning scheduled for the areas where the ill person was located. We don't need to close the office at this time. Please do not use the following areas of the office {describe}until cleaning has been completed. We expect that we will be back to normal operations tomorrow and will keep you informed.

In the meantime, unless you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, there is no need to consult your doctor or get a COVID-19 test. Please stay calm and bring your questions to our team meeting. I/We will answer all your questions as best we are able.

Experience has shown us that our workplace protocols are effective at minimizing the risk of transmission at the work site. These protocols help protect us even if a person in the workplace was COVID-19 positive. Omicron is more transmissible than previous variants of COVID-19, and we all must be vigilant in the workplace to ensure that safety protocols are followed. If any of us feel unwell we don't attend the worksite or if we begin to feel unwell at work we leave immediately.