ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT

ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT REGIONAL DISTRICT COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PLAN

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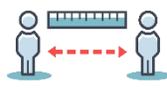
1.0   Overview

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) employees with important information required to help prevent communicable disease.

Public Health Directives

The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) for BC is responsible for monitoring the health of the population across the province, providing independent advice to the ministers and public officials on public health issues.

The responsibilities of the PHO are outlined in the *Public Health Act* and include the following:

- provide independent advice to the ministers and public officials on public health issues;
- monitor the health of the population of BC and advise on public health issues and on the need for legislation, policies and practices;
- recommend actions to improve the health and wellness of the population of BC;
- deliver reports that are in the public interest on the health of the population and on government's progress in achieving population health targets;
- establish standards of practice for and conduct performance reviews of Medical Health Officers; and
- work with the BC Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and BC's Medical Health Officers across the province to fulfill their legislated mandates on disease control and health protection.

Employers must be prepared to implement or maintain additional measures at times when the risk of communicable disease in their region or workplace is elevated, as advised, and directed by public health. Public Health's specific guidance for a particular communicable disease will be followed where their information differs from this document.

WorkSafeBC Directives (Workers Compensation Act/OHS Regulation Requirements)

WorkSafeBC is a provincial agency dedicated to promoting safe and healthy workplaces across BC. They partner with workers and employers to prevent work-related injury, disease, and disability. Their services include education, prevention, compensation and support for injured workers, and no-fault insurance to protect employers and workers.

WorkSafeBC helps businesses meet their obligations under the *Workers Compensation Act* and the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. All employers in BC have an obligation under the *Act* to ensure the health and safety of workers and other parties at their workplace.

To assist employers in the fundamental components of communicable disease prevention, WorkSafeBC has developed Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers . This guide describes a four-step process to help employers reduce the risk of communicable disease in their workplace, which involves understanding the level of risk in the workplace, application of the fundamentals and implementing appropriate measures, communicating policies and protocols to all workers, and updating measures and safeguards as required.

Recognize Hazards/Assess Risks

Every workplace is unique. Employers must regularly assess all the hazards within their operations, taking appropriate steps to eliminate or control the associated risk. This process is referred to as a risk assessment.

Within workplaces, there are many routine situations where staff will have contact with customers, coworkers, and the physical environment itself (surfaces, doors, equipment etc.). During times of outbreaks, these encounters could give rise to contact with communicable diseases, if not controlled adequately.

All employers must think about the risks in their workplace and take steps to control them. Such controls will include adhering to current public health orders, if applicable, public health advice, as well as implementing best practices to keep your employees and customers safe.

When selecting a safeguard or a combination of safeguards, always start at the top of the hierarchy outlined below to control the hazards. Choose a less effective safeguard only when more effective solutions are impracticable and continuously monitor to ensure they are providing the best level of protection to workers.

The hierarchy of controls (in order of their effectiveness):

Elimination or substitution: Has the employer fully considered eliminating or postponing work tasks that may create a risk of exposure? Are there opportunities to work from home or can work processes be changed to eliminate or reduce contact with others?

Engineering controls: Are engineering controls, such as physical barriers, practicable?

Administrative controls: Has the employer fully considered how work practices can be altered to minimize exposure, such as physical distancing or enhanced cleaning protocols?

Personal protective equipment (PPE): This last form of protection should only be considered after careful consideration of the previous control measures. The use of gloves and face masks may be considered where none of the above controls are possible/effective. If gloves and masks are used, proper usage guidelines should be followed.

2.0   Stay Home or Isolated from Others When Your Sick

What Employees Should Know

All employees should stay home or isolate from others in congregate living situations when they are sick or show symptoms of illness and follow public health recommendations.

- www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/communicable-disease-control-manual

and HealthlinkBC

- https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/

If you become sick at work

Workers who have symptoms upon arrival to work or become ill during the day should promptly separate themselves from other workers, inform their supervisors and go home or isolate from others in congregate living conditions.

What Employers Should Know

An important way to reduce the spread of communicable diseases is to keep sick people away from those who are not sick.

- For the flu, advise all employees to stay home or isolated from others if they are sick until at least 24 hours after their fever is gone without the use of fever-reducing medicines, or after symptoms have improved.

3.0 Hygiene/Cleaning

Personal Hygiene/Cleaning

Depending on the communicable disease, it's possible for people to become infected if they touch contaminated surfaces and then touch their nose, mouth, or eyes. The most reliable way to prevent infection from surfaces is to wash your hands. Washing your hands often and practicing good hand hygiene will reduce the chances of getting or spreading germs. Washing your hands with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds is most effective. This is because soap actively destroys the surface of some viruses, and a soapy lather reduces the number of germs left on your skin. Alcohol-based hand rubs can be used to disinfect your hands when soap and water are not available.

Other things to consider:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow when you sneeze or cough instead of your hands.
- Do not share food, drinks, utensils, etc.
- Avoid unnecessary contact.
- Consider physical distancing.
- Wear a mask.

Facility, Vehicle and Equipment Hygiene

Viruses and germs can land on surfaces. It's possible for people to become infected if they touch those surfaces and then touch their nose, mouth or eyes. The following are general guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting common work areas, vehicles and equipment.

At a minimum, clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces at the end of each shift, Ensure that cleaning and disinfection procedures are followed consistently and correctly, including the provision of adequate ventilation when chemicals are in use. When cleaning and disinfecting, individuals should wear disposable gloves compatible with the products being used as well as any other PPE required according to the product manufacturer's instructions.

Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces can also reduce the risk of infection

Always follow standard practices and appropriate regulations specific to your type of facility for minimum standards for cleaning and disinfection. This guidance is indicated for buildings in community settings and is **not** intended for <u>healthcare settings</u> or for <u>other facilities</u> where specific regulations or practices for cleaning and disinfection may apply. Additionally, this guidance only applies to cleaning and disinfection practices to prevent the spread of exposures. It does not apply to any cleaning or disinfection needed to prevent the spread of other germs.

When to clean and When to Disinfect

Cleaning with products containing soap or detergent reduces germs on surfaces by removing contaminants and decreases risk of infection from surfaces.

When confirmed or suspected communicable disease cases are low, <u>cleaning once a day is usually enough</u> to sufficiently remove germs that may be on surfaces and help maintain a healthy facility.

Disinfecting kills any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

You may want to either clean more frequently or choose to disinfect (in addition to cleaning) in shared spaces if the space is a high traffic area or if certain conditions apply that can increase the risk of infection from touching surfaces:

- [Reportable Disease Data Dashboard](#)
- [BC COVID Dashboard](#) in your community.
- Low vaccination rates in your community.
- Infrequent use of other prevention measures, such as hand hygiene; or
- The space is occupied by people at increased risk for severe illness.

If there has been a sick person in your facility within the last 24 hours, you should clean AND disinfect the space.

Determine What Needs to Be Cleaned

Consider the <u>type of surface</u> and how often the surface is touched. Generally, the more people who touch a surface, the higher the risk. Prioritize cleaning high-touch surfaces at least once a day. If the space is a high traffic area, or if certain conditions (listed above) apply, you may choose to clean more frequently or disinfect in addition to cleaning.

Consider the Resources and Equipment Needed

Keep in mind the availability of cleaning products and the personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate for the cleaners and disinfectants used (as recommended on the product label, product information sheets or Safety Data Sheet).

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4.0   Ventilation

For all activities that take place indoors, basic principles of good indoor air quality include supplying outdoor air to replenish indoor air and maintaining ventilation systems thereby removing and diluting contaminants that naturally accumulate in indoor settings, especially in well-sealed buildings.

- During periods of communicable disease events limiting occupancy in facilities or vehicles should be considered.

5.0   Promotion of Employee Vaccinations

The ACRD will support Public Health messaging for vaccinations against pandemic or communicable diseases and may collaborate with Public Health to offer vaccination clinics in public facilities.

The ACRD recognizes the public health benefits of vaccination programs to reduce illness, disability and death from community acquired diseases and encourages employee participation in public health vaccination programs.

Reasons to get Vaccinated.

1. **Vaccine-preventable diseases have not gone away**
   The viruses and bacteria that cause illness and death still exist and can be passed on to those who are not protected by vaccines.
2. **Vaccines will help keep you healthy**
   Vaccines can prevent short term illnesses and prevent long term chronic disability or increased risk of cancer depending on disease.
3. **Vaccines are important to your overall health along with proper diet and exercise**
   Vaccines play an important part of maintaining health along with eating healthy foods, exercising and getting regular check-ups. They are one of the most convenient and safest preventive care measures available.
4. **Vaccination can mean the difference between life and death**
   Vaccine-preventable infections can be deadly. Example: Every year in the US, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, approximately 50,000 adults died from vaccine-preventable diseases.
5. **Vaccines are safe**
   Potential side effects associated with vaccines are uncommon and much less severe than the diseases they prevent.
6. **Vaccines will not cause the diseases they are designed to prevent**
   Vaccines contain either killed or weakened viruses, making it impossible to get the disease from the vaccine.
7. **Young and healthy people can get very sick, too**
   Infants and older adults are at increased risk for serious infections and complications, but vaccine-preventable diseases can strike anyone. If you are young and healthy, getting vaccinated can help you stay that way.

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8. **Vaccine-preventable diseases are expensive**
   Diseases not only have a direct impact on individuals and their families, but also carry a high price tag for society as a whole.

9. **When you get sick, your children, grandchildren, and parents may be at risk, too**
   Adults are the most common source of pertussis (whooping cough) infection in infants which can be deadly for babies. When you get vaccinated, you are protecting yourself and your family as well as those in your community who may not be able to be vaccinated.

10. **Your family and co-workers need you**
    Millions of adults get sick from vaccine-preventable diseases, causing them to miss work and leaving them unable to care for those who depend on them, including their children and/or aging parents.

6.0   Promotion of Employee Mental Health

A communicable disease event may cause increased levels of stress or anxiety for employees. This is because some communicable diseases are new or evolved so the scientific facts about the hazards and risks of the disease may be unknown or uncertain. Uncertainty increases stress.

As part of this plan, it is a good opportunity to review related organizational policies and programs such as:

- Employee Assistance Program www.workhealthlife.com;

  Organization: **REGIONAL DISTRICT OF ALBERNI CLAYOQUOT**

- Mental Health Resources

  WorkSafeBC Resources - managing-mental-health-effects-covid-19-guide-for-employers