



# **SHELTERS & COVID-19 VIRUS**

**A RESOURCE FOR  
ABORIGINAL  
SHELTERS OF  
ONTARIO MEMBERS**

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# *Introduction*

Shelters serving Indigenous families: we urge you to take precautions to keep staff, community, and people who enter your shelters safe. We understand that the most effective effort for keeping people who are strangers safe is to use 'social distancing.' While this can be a useful approach to keeping COVID-19 from spreading, shelters are unable to put this into practice as people are housed in small spaces, sharing bathroom facilities, and sharing food preparation and kitchen duties. We understand that most shelters will have created their own protocols by now, but we have developed this resource guide to further support shelter workers and people receiving services in keeping safe.

The arrival of COVID-19 in Ontario is well-known and, while some services are being suspended within communities, it is necessary that Family Violence Shelters remain in operation to the fullest extent possible. In order for this to happen, both staff and people receiving services must be kept healthy and well. It is important to react to this situation based on accurate information. This resource is a reminder to use Indigenous Knowledge and Medicines to aid in the efforts to keep the COVID-19 virus out of shelters and also offers a quick resource based on information from government sources. This information is current as of March 18, 2020; it must be recognized that this situation is dynamic.



# *In-Shelter Best Practices*

People seeking or receiving services should be screened before attending (if calling) or upon arrival to Shelter. Below is a sample screening being used in the health care sector. If a person receiving services has any risk factors for having COVID-19, they should be immediately provided with a medical mask (if in-person and available) and referred to an appropriate medical or testing facility (this varies by region). This same screening tool may be used for assessing whether staff need to self-isolate.

Your shelter has its own protocols for cleaning, sanitizing, and/or disinfecting areas that are prone to spreading illness. It is important to continue to uphold these protocols, and increase the frequency and intensity of such practices where applicable and possible. For example, frequently touched things such as light switches, door handles, faucets, and shared phones and keyboards should be paid special attention when cleaning.

Both people receiving services and staff should self-monitor themselves and others for the development of symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 range from mild to severe and can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

## Sample Screening

Is the patient presenting with:

1. Fever, and/or new onset of cough, or difficulty breathing.

**AND** any of the following:

2. Travel to mainland China in the 14 days before the onset of illness

**OR**

Close contact with a confirmed or probable case of 2019-nCoV

**OR**

Close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to mainland China in the 14 days before their symptom onset.

\* Sample from Ontario Ministry of Health

The most important action to be taken at this time is to prevent the contraction and spread of illness. In addition to preventing the spread of COVID, such actions can prevent the spread of ailments such as influenza and reduce the overall burden on the medical system that may result from complications possible with such illnesses. According to the Ontario Ministry of Health, the COVID-19 virus spreads (similarly to the flu) through close contact with those who are infected. The best ways to avoid contracting and/or spreading a virus are to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay home if you are sick

Any person receiving services who shows signs of having contracted COVID-19 should be isolated to the greatest extent possible and staff should follow proper isolation protocol when interacting with people who may be ill (see appended resources). Medical advice should be sought immediately and explicitly followed. Individuals who are older adults and/or have serious chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and lung disease are at a higher risk of complications from COVID-19.

Health officials are also calling for social distancing, which involves minimizing face-to-face interactions as much as possible. This is difficult to maintain in shelters as it means asking people to keep a distance of at least six feet from each other when interacting. This should be practiced where possible.

Shelters should consider ways in which they can limit the number of people attending the shelter. For example, if outside organizations provide services in-shelter, postpone these or carry out remotely if possible. Use any technology you may have to support distant communications, such as conferencing systems or Smart Boards. (Please see appended sign to post at entryways for visitors).

Shelters may also want to consider limiting unessential group programming to prevent potential spread within the shelter as individuals may not show symptoms of having contracted COVID-19, but still be able to spread it to others; it is believed that COVID-19 spreads mainly through close contact between individuals, rather than through touching a contaminated surface.

# Traditional Medicines / Natural Approaches

## **ONEN'TAKWENHTÉNHTSHERA/ KIIZHIK**

Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis* is its scientific name) is full of Vitamin C, which is crucial for human survival and to build immunity. This powerful medicine can be burned daily as a disinfectant to fumigate the shelter. It is so powerful that it was used as a known remedy to fumigate for smallpox in our not-so-distant past.

### **As a Tea**

When gathering Cedar bring Oien'kwa'ón:we or Semah (tobacco) to share your intentions, take shelter residents with you if you are able to.

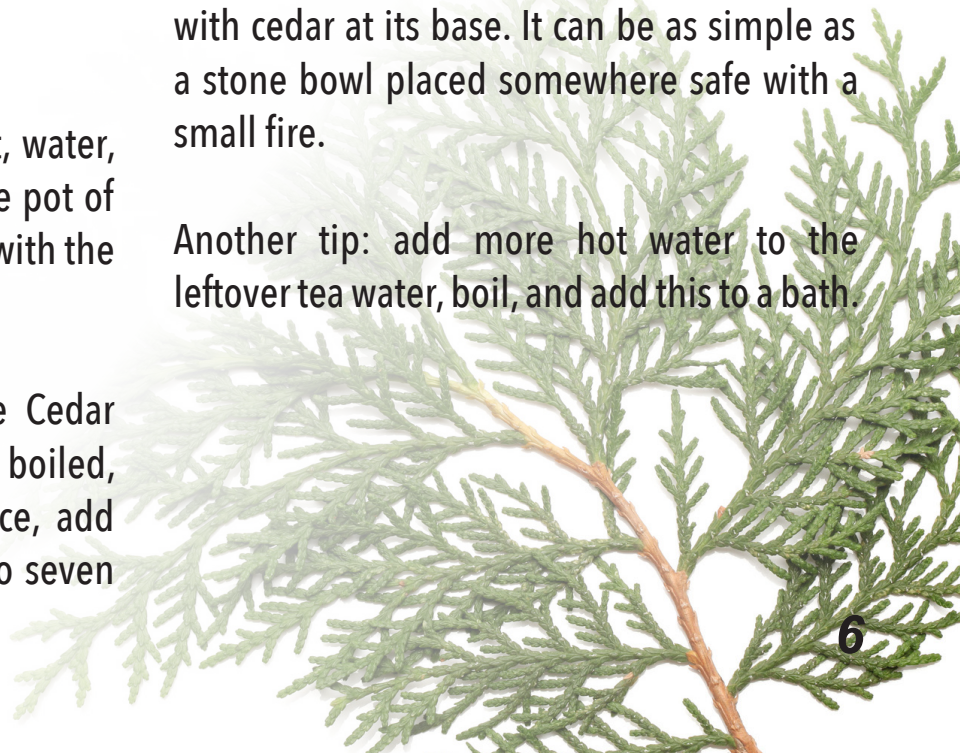
Take a handful of cedar leaves, a pot, water, and access to a heat source. Bring the pot of water to a boil, share your intentions with the water as well.

While the water is heating, cut the Cedar into small pieces. Once the water has boiled, remove the pot from the heat source, add the cedar pieces, and cover for five to seven minutes to let steep.

Never drink more than one cup per day (limit to 1/2 cup for children; infants may be bathed in a gentle steep). While Cedar is a safe and very effective medicine, like any other medicine, it should be treated with respect; overdoing it will create a toxic effect. Cedar contains Thujone, which is toxic to the human body in large doses. A recommended amount is three cups per week on regular intervals.

A way to respect and consume the medicine regularly may be to offer Cedar Tea Days every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. Light a symbolic or real Sacred Fire at your shelter with cedar at its base. It can be as simple as a stone bowl placed somewhere safe with a small fire.

Another tip: add more hot water to the leftover tea water, boil, and add this to a bath.



## **As a Disinfectant**

Purchase empty spray bottles and add Cedar water to use as a hand spray.

Follow the above instructions and add Sage to the water. Sage is a healing plant that is 'verified' based on scientific analysis of its properties that show it contains certain polyphenols, which are natural antioxidants that protect cells from toxins and organisms in the environment that cause infections; it is antifungal, antiseptic, and an astringent. Also burn this medicine as part of daily cleansing rituals or protocols.

Have all residents keep their own bottle of Cedar/Sage water on their person and use it frequently.

## **Additional Uses for Cedar**

- Leaves and twigs burned for prayer or in a Sacred Fire
- Above door frames within the shelter
- External or topical uses include: poultice of powdered leaves applied to swellings
- Poultice of powdered, rotten wood used for rashes and skin irritations
- Branches and cedar leaves used in steam baths for ceremony and fevers
- Used as a deodorant
- Plant tips used as a foot bath for rheumatism
- A wash or poultice for cuts, bruises, or sores
- A wash for weakness



## **COLD WATER IMMERSION**

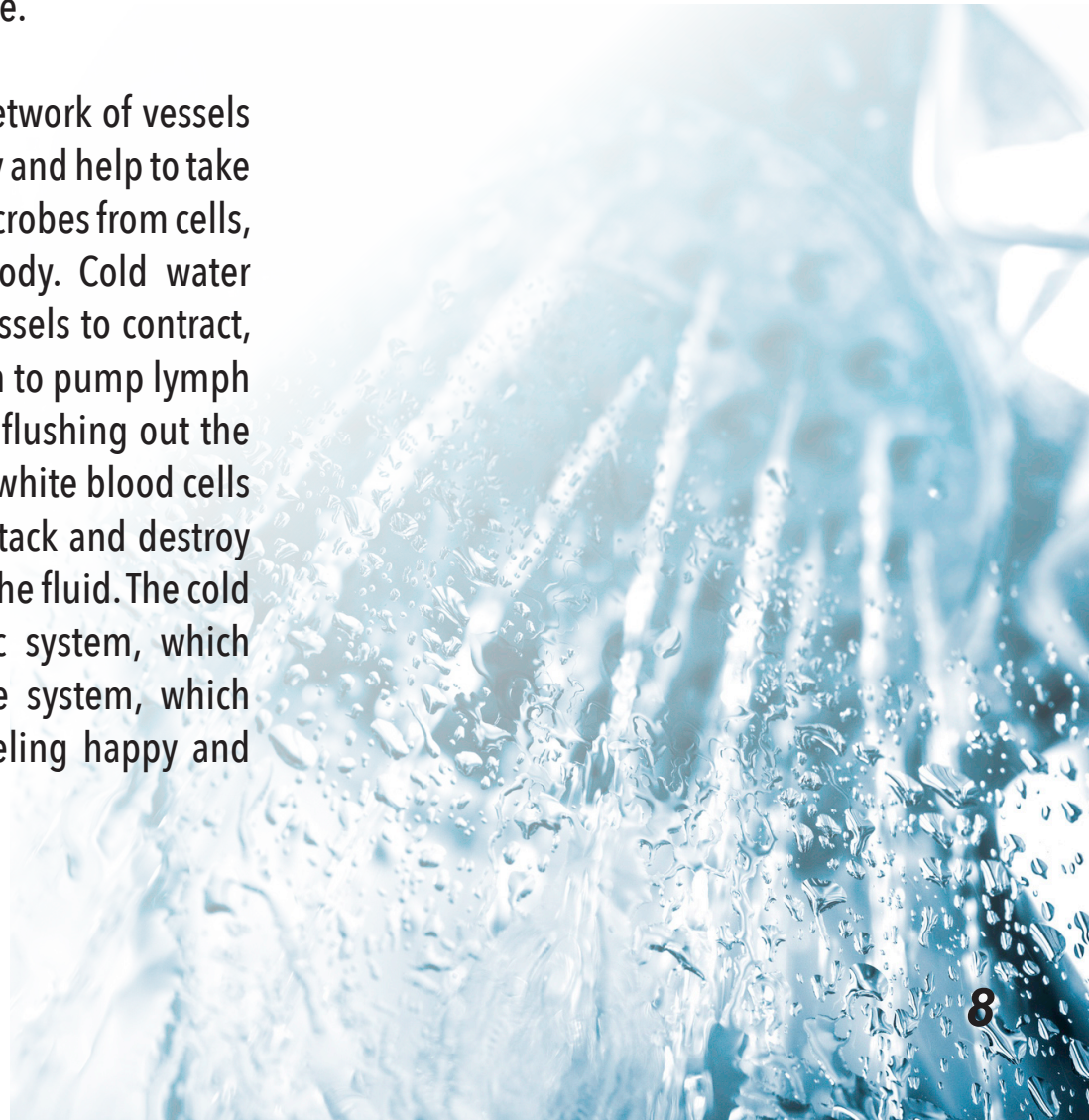
Have residents and staff practice this cost-free prevention measure: After each shower turn the water as cold as possible for one minute and expose all parts of the body, from head to toe, to the water, focus on the under arms in particular.

Cold water immersion activates the body's natural healing powers that can relieve the symptoms of many medical conditions and promote a sense of health and well-being. When practiced on a regular basis, cold water immersion can even provide long-lasting positive changes to immune, lymphatic, circulatory, and digestive systems that will enhance overall quality of life.

The lymphatic system is a network of vessels that run throughout the body and help to take away waste, bacteria, and microbes from cells, essentially cleansing the body. Cold water immersion causes lymph vessels to contract, forcing the lymphatic system to pump lymph fluids throughout the body, flushing out the waste. The flushing triggers white blood cells of the immune system to attack and destroy any unwanted substance in the fluid. The cold water affects the lymphatic system, which in turn affects the immune system, which ultimately keeps people feeling happy and healthy.

Cold water lowers the temperature of damaged tissue and constricts the blood vessels. This helps reduce swelling and inflammation and even numbs the nerve endings to bring immediate relief to any pain.

Cold showers can also help treat depression symptoms, and if used on a routine basis, may be more beneficial than prescription medications. This is because, cold water triggers a flood of mood-boosting neurotransmitters to make people feel happy.





# Staff Protocol

Staff who have any risk factors for COVID-19 should self-quarantine for fourteen days, in consultation with a medical professional and their employer. If symptoms develop and are mild, they should remain at home. For symptoms that are severe/life threatening they should seek medical care immediately. Contact between staff who are continuing to work should be limited to the greatest extent possible through measures such as no overlap during shift change; updates should be conducted through notes, email, or over the phone. Additionally, practices such as in-person staff meetings should be avoided.

Despite the need for physical distance, it is wise to stay in touch by phone or e-mail in order to give comfort to one another during this stressful time. Leaving offerings/helpful items on desks and/or on the doorstep of a fellow shelter worker if in isolation are compassionate and safe things you can do to lift spirits.

We are continually monitoring the situation for subsidies for staff that have to be home from work. We know (as of March, 18 2020) that the federal government is working on making adjustments to Employment Insurance (EI) sick-leave benefits to support individuals who have to self-quarantine due to COVID-19.

The one-week 'waiting period' for EI benefits will be eliminated so that workers who must self-quarantine will receive a percentage (55%) of their earnings (up to \$573/week) for the two-week period away from work. The federal government is currently examining options for "direct income supports" for those who are ineligible for EI sickness benefits (have not worked the minimum 600 hours required in the previous year or since their last EI claim). The most recent information is that an "Emergency Care Benefit" will be available to workers who do not qualify for paid sick leave or employment insurance and must be away from work for reasons related to COVID-19. Further, the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social services is working towards adjusting access and eligibility for emergency assistance (currently only available through the Ontario Works program).

There will be no medical certificate required to receive these benefits if an individual is required to go into quarantine by law or by a public-health official, or asked to self-isolate by their employer (please note employees who self-isolate on their own accord, without consulting with their employer will not qualify for these benefits).

# *Worker Rights*

Core staffing protocol should be put in place with only essential staff present at any time at the Shelter. This will both reduce the possibility of illness spreading within the Shelter and ensure there is a reserve of staff should any staff become ill and unable to work. Staff who are immune-suppressed, have chronic health conditions, or are pregnant should be allowed to refuse work or work remotely if at all possible.

Provincial legislation has been proposed that will protect Ontario workers from losing their jobs as a result of some common COVID-19 work-related scenarios. The proposed legislation provides job protection for employees who are in isolation or quarantine due to COVID-19 OR who are unable to work due to child care obligations that arise from school and daycare closures, or a need to care for someone as a result of COVID-19 illness. Employees will not be required to supply a medical note if they take leave for any of these reasons, but should communicate the reason for the absences with their employer.

## *For More Information*

As noted above, the current situation is incredibly dynamic with new information being learned everyday about COVID-19 and the supports being put in place to help cope with the situation.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to your local health office if you require assistance with a particular situation pertaining to health and wellness in your shelter.

# Resources

## Attention Visitors



If you have a fever and/or new onset of cough or difficulty breathing

**AND**

In the 14 days before symptom onset, you have:

- been to a COVID-19 impacted area, **or**
- you have been in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, **or**
- you have been in close contact with a person with acute respiratory illness who has been to a COVID-19 impacted area,

**please delay your visit AND contact your health care provider, or Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000)**

## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

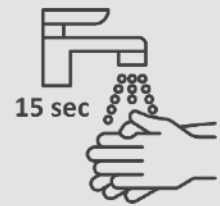
# Self-isolation: Guide for caregivers, household members and close contacts

If you are caring for or living with someone who has the virus, you are considered a 'close contact'.

Your local public health unit will give you special instructions about how to monitor your own health, what to do if you start to feel sick and how to contact them. Be sure to tell health care providers that you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

### Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands with soap and water after each contact with the infected person.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



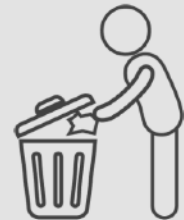
### Wear mask and gloves

- Wear a mask and gloves when you have contact with the person's saliva or other body fluids (e.g. blood, sweat, saliva, vomit, urine and feces).



### Dispose of gloves and mask after use

- Take the gloves and mask off right after you provide care and dispose of them in the wastebasket lined with the plastic bag.
- Take off the gloves first and clean your hands with soap and water before taking off your mask.
- Clean your hands again with soap and water before touching your face or doing anything else.



### Limit the number of visitors in your home

- Only have visitors who you must see and keep the visits short.
- Keep seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, and immune deficiency) away from the infected person.



## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

# How to self-isolate

Follow the advice that you have received from your health care provider. If you have questions, or you start to feel worse, contact your health care provider, Telehealth (1-866-797-0000) or your local public health unit.

### Stay home

- Do not use public transportation, taxis or rideshares.
- Do not go to work, school or other public places.
- Your health care provider or public health unit will tell you when it is safe to leave.



### Limit the number of visitors in your home

- Only have visitors who you must see and keep the visits short.
- Keep away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, immune deficiency).



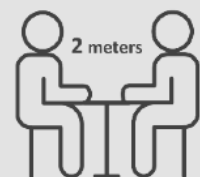
### Avoid contact with others

- Stay in a separate room away from other people in your home as much as possible and use a separate bathroom if you have one.
- Make sure that shared rooms have good airflow (e.g. open windows).



### Keep distance

- If you are in a room with other people, keep a distance of at least two metres and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.
- If you cannot wear a mask, people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.





## IMPORTANT NOTICE — Social Distancing

Ohsweken, ON, Mar. 15, 2020: Due to COVID-19, we are encouraging the community to practice social distancing to reduce the spread of this virus. Everyone's health and safety is important to us. Below are some guidelines to assist in social distancing practices.

# **SOCIAL DISTANCING:**

## **What does it mean?**

Social distancing is the practice of reducing close contact between people to slow the spread of infections or diseases. Social distancing measures include limiting large groups of people coming together, closing buildings and cancelling events.



### AVOID

- Group Gatherings
- Sleep Overs
- Playdates
- Concerts
- Theatre Outings
- Athletic Events
- Crowded Retail Stores
- Malls
- Workouts in Gyms
- Visitors in your Home
- Non-essential workers in your house
- Mass Transit Systems



### USE CAUTION

- Visit a local Restaurant
- Visit Grocery Store
- Get Take Out
- Pick Up Medications
- Play at the Park
- Visiting the Library
- Church Services
- Traveling



### SAFE TO DO

- Take a walk
- Go for a Hike
- Yard Work
- Play in your Yard
- Clean out a Closet
- Read a Good Book
- Listen to Music
- Cook a Meal
- Family Game Night
- Go for a Drive
- Group Video Chats
- Stream a favourite show
- Call to Check on a Friend
- Call to Check on Elderly Neighbour

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

## SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19



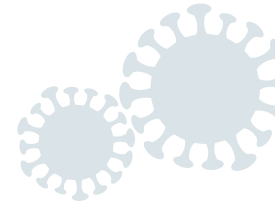
FEVER








COUGH



DIFFICULTY BREATHING



| SELF-MONITORING                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | SELF-ISOLATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | ISOLATION                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p> You have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ no symptoms</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ a history of possible exposure to the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, in the last 14 days</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <p>You have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ no symptoms</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 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</li> </ul>                                           | <p>You have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ symptoms, even if mild</li> </ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you have been <b>diagnosed with COVID-19</b> or are waiting for the results of a lab test for COVID-19</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p> <b>SELF-MONITOR</b> means to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>monitor yourself</b> for 14 days for one or more symptoms of COVID-19</li> <li>▶ go about your day but <b>avoid crowded places</b> and increase your personal space from others, whenever possible</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>SELF-ISOLATE</b> means to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>stay at home</b> and monitor yourself for symptoms, even if mild, for 14 days</li> <li>▶ <b>avoid contact with other people</b> to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community in the event you become symptomatic</li> </ul> | <p>To be <b>ISOLATED</b> means to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>stay at home</b> until your Public Health Authority advises you that you are no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others</li> <li>▶ <b>avoid contact with other people</b> 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</li> </ul> |
| <p> You need to <b>self-monitor</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you have reason to believe you have been <b>exposed to a person</b> with COVID-19</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p> ▶ you are in <b>close contact</b> with older adults or medically vulnerable people</p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you have <b>been advised to self-monitor</b> for any other reason by your Public Health Authority</li> </ul> | <p><b>Self-isolate</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you have travelled <b>outside of Canada</b> within the last 14 days</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ your Public Health Authority has identified you as a <b>close contact</b> of someone diagnosed with COVID-19</li> </ul> | <p>You need to <b>isolate</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you have been <b>diagnosed</b> with COVID-19</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you are <b>waiting to hear the results</b> of a laboratory test for COVID-19</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ you have been <b>advised to isolate at home</b> for any other reason by your Public Health Authority</li> </ul>        |
| <p> If you develop symptoms, <b>isolate yourself from others immediately</b> and contact your <b>Public Health Authority</b> as soon as possible</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>If you develop symptoms, even if mild, <b>stay home, avoid other people</b> and contact your <b>Public Health Authority</b> as soon as possible</p>                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>If your symptoms get worse, immediately contact your healthcare provider or <b>Public Health Authority</b> and <b>follow their instructions</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

**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)

 [phac.info.aspc@canada.ca](mailto:phac.info.aspc@canada.ca)