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How you want to be treated.

# **Activity Guide for Transitioning Home From Hospital After COVID-19**

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## Useful Links

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### **BC Centre for Disease Control**

[bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19](https://bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19)

### **Vancouver Coastal Health – COVID information**

[vch.ca/covid-19](https://vch.ca/covid-19)

### **Post COVID-19 Recovery Clinics**

[phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/post-covid-19-recovery-clinics](https://phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/post-covid-19-recovery-clinics)

### **HealthLinkBC**

[healthlinkbc.ca](https://healthlinkbc.ca)

or call 8-1-1

### **BC COVID-19 Support smartphone app**

[bc.thrive.health/covid19app](https://bc.thrive.health/covid19app)

### **World Health Organization**

[who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019](https://who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)

### **Home exercise handouts**

Level 1 (Sitting): [vch.ca/Documents/HAP-Level-1-Sitting.pdf](https://vch.ca/Documents/HAP-Level-1-Sitting.pdf)

Level 2 (Standing): [vch.ca/Documents/HAP-Level-2-Standing.pdf](https://vch.ca/Documents/HAP-Level-2-Standing.pdf)

Level 3 (Moving): [vch.ca/Documents/HAP-Level-3-Moving.pdf](https://vch.ca/Documents/HAP-Level-3-Moving.pdf)

Videos of all exercises:

[findingbalancebc.ca/exercise/sail-home-activity-program/](https://findingbalancebc.ca/exercise/sail-home-activity-program/)

### **Breathing exercise handouts**

[vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.510.B74.pdf](https://vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.510.B74.pdf)

[vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.200.P741.pdf](https://vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.200.P741.pdf)

[vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.510.L58.pdf](https://vch.eduhealth.ca/PDFs/FN/FN.510.L58.pdf)

### **Mental health supports**

[cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health](https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health)

[crisiscentrechat.ca](https://crisiscentrechat.ca)

<https://keltymentalhealth.ca>

<https://bouncebackbc.ca>

# Guide for BC Patients Transitioning Home

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The goal of this guide is to help people who have been hospitalized with COVID-19 continue to recover at home. This guide is intended for a wide audience and is **not intended to replace specific medical advice** that you have been given.

Being diagnosed with COVID-19 may have had an impact on your breathing, strength and mobility. It may also have affected your mental health. If you have had severe disease requiring admission to the ICU, recovery may be slower and more prolonged.

Please do not hesitate to contact your community care team or primary care physician with any questions or concerns during your recovery from COVID-19. You can also call 8-1-1 anytime to talk to a nurse at HealthLinkBC and get advice about how to address your concerns.

**If you have any new, recurrent or worsening of symptoms, such as fever, increasing shortness of breath, or chest pain, please contact your health care provider or call 911 without delay.**

## About My Journey With COVID-19

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**Please answer the following questions:**

Date my illness/symptoms started:

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My date of discharge from hospital:

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I will be in self isolation until **(a member of the public health team will tell me)**:

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Reasons to contact my health care provider or return to hospital are:

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**Please wash clothing and any personal items upon returning home.**

# COVID-19 General Information

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## What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19.

While many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown, mild to severe illness has been reported for confirmed cases.

## How it spreads

Coronavirus is transmitted via liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes. The virus can enter through these droplets through the eyes, nose or throat if you are in close contact with the other person.

It can be spread by touch if a person has used their hands to cover their mouth or nose when they cough. That is why we recommend you cough or sneeze into your arm and wash your hands with soap regularly.

## Symptoms of a COVID-19 infection

Watch for symptoms of COVID-19 that can appear up to 14 days after being exposed to the virus.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses including the flu and common cold. They include:

- Cough
- Sneezing
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Difficulty breathing

Other symptoms may include: muscle aches, fatigue, headache, loss of appetite, chills, runny nose, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, loss of sense of smell or taste.

People infected with COVID-19 may experience few or no symptoms with illness ranging from mild to severe. Sometimes people with COVID-19 have mild illness, but their symptoms may suddenly worsen in a few days.

**The following 5 pages will review information about isolating at home, as well as information for any caregivers or close live-in contacts.**

# How to Isolate

## For those who have COVID-19 or respiratory symptoms

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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, 8-1-1, your local public health unit, or complete the COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment tool by visiting [covid19.thrive.health](https://covid19.thrive.health).

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**Most people should isolate for 10 days after the onset of first symptoms. Some people with certain medical conditions may be asked to isolate for 20 days. Public Health will let you know when it is safe to stop isolating.**

- Do not go to work, school, or public areas including places of worship, stores, shopping malls and restaurants.
- Do not use public transportation, taxis or rideshares.
- If leaving your home for medical care, call ahead and tell the medical facility that you are coming in so they can prepare for you.

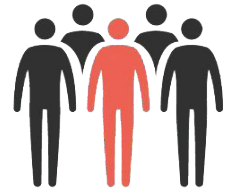


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### Do not have visitors to your home

It is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food or other necessities, but try to have them drop off deliveries outside your home.

- Keep away from seniors and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, heart disease or weakened immune system).

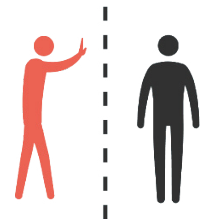


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### Avoid contact with others at home

Stay and sleep 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).

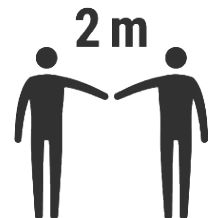


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### Keep distance

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.

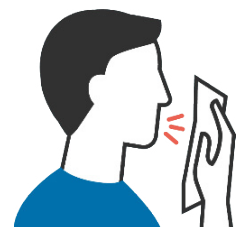
- If you cannot wear a mask, people should wear a mask when they are in the same room as you.



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### Cover your coughs and sneezes

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hand.
- Throw used tissues in a lined wastebasket, and wash your hands. Lining the wastebasket with a plastic bag makes waste disposal easier and safer.



- Wash your hands after emptying the wastebasket.

### Wash your hands

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Dry your hands with a paper towel, or with your own cloth towel that no one else shares.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



### Wear a mask over your nose and mouth

- Wear a mask (surgical or procedure mask) if you must leave your house to see a health care provider.
- Wear a mask when you are with other people.



### Recovery and ending isolation

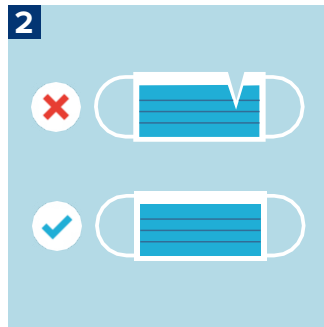
- Most people should isolate for 10 days after the onset of first symptoms.
- However, if you were hospitalized because of your COVID-19 symptoms, you will need to isolate for a total of 20 days after the onset of your first symptoms.
- If you are discharged from hospital after 20 days have passed since your first symptoms you do not need to isolate anymore.
- Please call your family doctor if you are unsure.
- Coughing may persist for several weeks, so coughing alone does not require you to continue to isolate.



# How to Wear a Face Mask



Wash your hands with soap and water for 20–30 seconds or perform hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub before touching the face mask.



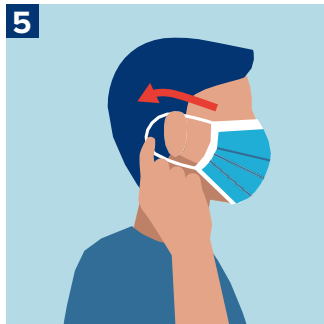
Check the new mask to make sure it's not damaged.



Ensure colour side of the mask faces outwards.



Locate the metallic strip. Place it over and mold it to the nose bridge.



Place an ear loop around each ear or tie the top and bottom straps.



Cover mouth and nose fully, making sure there are no gaps. Pull the bottom of the mask to fully open and fit under your chin.



Press the metallic strip again to fit the shape of your nose. Perform hand hygiene.

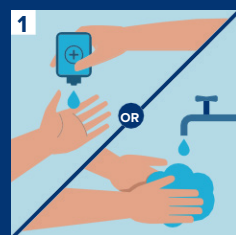


Do not touch the mask while using it, if you do, perform hand hygiene.



Replace the mask if it gets wet or dirty and wash your hands again after putting it on. Do not reuse the mask.

## Removing the mask



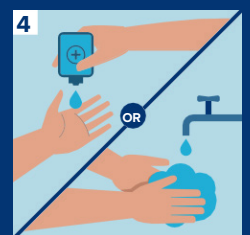
Perform hand hygiene.



Do not touch the front of your mask. Lean forward, gently remove the mask from behind by holding both ear loops or ties.



Discard the mask in a waste container.



Perform hand hygiene.

# Guide for caregivers and household members of those with COVID-19 ('close contacts')

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If you are caring for or living with someone who has COVID-19 or respiratory symptoms, you are considered a 'close

contact.' You will be given special instructions about how to monitor your own health, what to do if you start to feel sick and who to contact. Be sure to tell health care providers that you are a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

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## 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 (surgical/procedure mask) and gloves when you have contact with the person's saliva or other body fluids (e.g. blood, sweat, vomit, urine and feces) and when providing direct contact care.



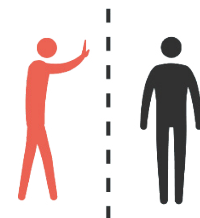
## Dispose of gloves and mask after use

- Take off the gloves first without touching the outside of the gloves, and wash your hands with soap and water before taking off your mask.
- After taking off your mask, wash your hands again with soap and water before touching your face or doing anything else.
- Take the gloves and mask off right after you provide care and dispose of them in the wastebasket lined with the plastic bag.



## Do not have visitors to your home

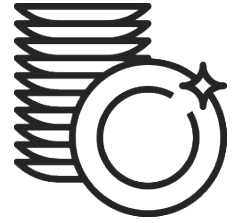
- It is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food or other necessities, but have them drop off deliveries outside your home.
- Keep older adults and people with chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, lung problems, heart disease or weakened immune system) away from the infected person.





## Avoid sharing household items

- Do not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding or other items with the person who is sick.
- After use, these items should be washed with soap or detergent in warm water. No special soap is needed.
- Dishwashers and washing machines can be used.
- Do not share cigarettes or other items that are put in the mouth.



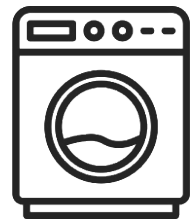
## Clean

- Clean your home with regular household cleaners.
- Clean regularly touched items such as toilets, sink tap handles, doorknobs and bedside tables on a daily basis.
- Use store bought disinfectant. If not available use diluted bleach solution, one part bleach to 50 parts water, and allow the surface to remain wet for 1 minute.



## Wash laundry thoroughly

- Contaminated laundry should be placed in a laundry basket with a plastic liner.
- Wear gloves and mask when handling.
- Wash with regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C)
- Clean your hands with soap and water immediately after removing your gloves.



## Be careful when touching waste

- All waste can go into regular garbage bins.
- When emptying wastebaskets, take care to not touch used tissues with your hands. Lining the wastebasket with a plastic bag makes waste disposal easier and safer.
- Clean your hands with soap and water after emptying the wastebasket.



# For Patients Recovering from COVID-19

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These are general recommendations. Please follow all instructions from your health care provider.

Your body is recovering from a serious illness. It may take some time to get back to “normal”, but with time and gentle activity you will get there!

## In Hospital

### Activity

The sooner you can get up and move around, the better it is for your recovery. Lying in bed leads to muscle weakness and can cause blood clots and pneumonia. Activity increases strength, helps to prevent complications, and helps get your bowels moving.

We will help get you up into a chair next to your bed. It is good to sit up in the chair for all your meals.

As you improve each day, you will be able to do more for yourself. Keep your activities short and do them often rather than try to do everything at once. We don't want you to get too tired.

### Exercise

If you are given exercise handouts, follow the instructions for when and how to do the exercises

### My Notes

# At Home

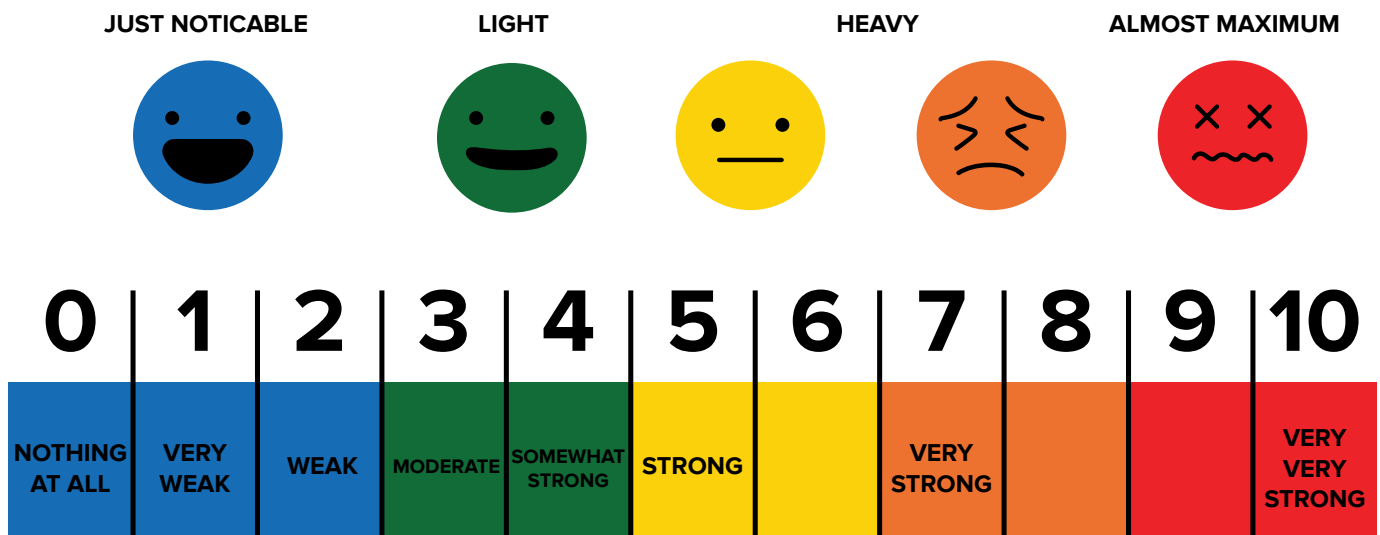
## Activity and exercise

### Rest:

- Rest is important for your recovery. Your body does its healing when you are resting.
- Try to get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Take naps or rest breaks frequently during the day.

### Exercise:

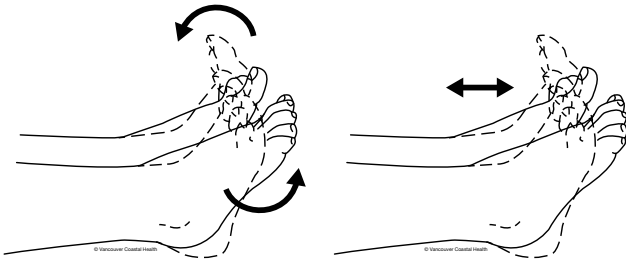
- Exercise helps build your strength, improves your circulation, and generally makes you feel better.
- Walking, exercise using your body, and breathing exercises, will all be helpful.
- If your health care provider has said you can go outside for walks:
  - Start a progressive daily walking program.
  - Begin on a flat surface with no hills and record the distance or the time that you walk. Gradually increase (10-15%) the distance or time that you are walking each day and slowly add in uneven surfaces and hills.
  - We recommend that you do several short walks a day with rests in between, instead of one long walk, to avoid fatigue and discomfort.
  - Keep 2 meters from other people, wear a mask if advised, and wash your hands before and after your walk. Follow your health care provider's instructions.
- For 6-8 weeks:
  - Be careful not to tire yourself out. Slowly increase your activity. Listen to your body. It will tell you if you are doing too much too soon.
  - On a scale of 1-10, keep your exercise near 3.



# General Mobility and Balance Exercises

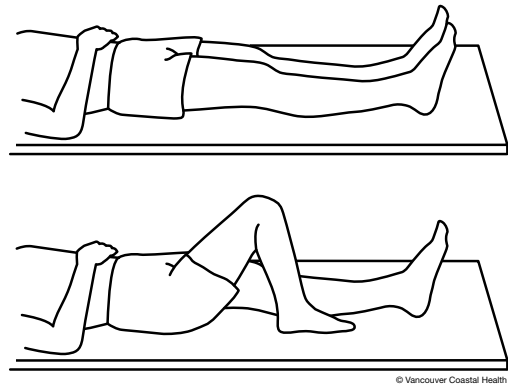
## Ankle Circles and pumps

1. Draw a circle with your toes, moving only your ankle.
  - Repeat in opposite direction.Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each ankle.
2. "Pump" your foot up and down, moving only at your ankle.  
Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each ankle.



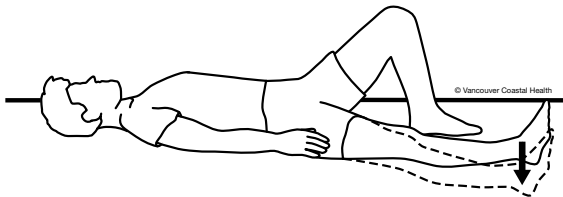
## Knee Bends

- Slide your heel towards your bottom as far as you can go, then slide back down until your knee is completely straight.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.



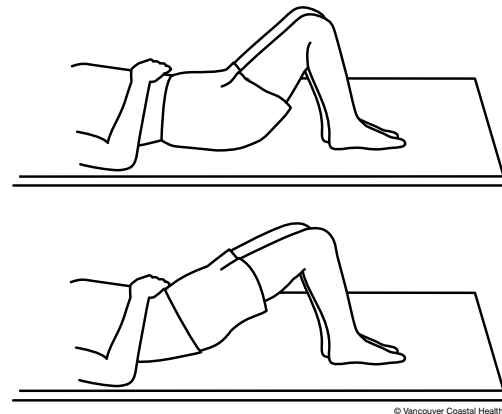
## Sideways Slides

- Lie on your back with your resting leg bent and your exercising leg straight with your toes pointing to the ceiling.
  - Slide your leg out to the side keeping your knee straight.
  - Hold for 5 seconds and slowly return to starting position.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each leg.



## Bottom Lifts

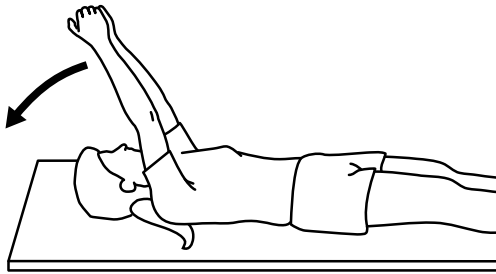
- Squeeze buttocks together gently, as if holding a pencil between your buttocks.
  - Lift bottom up and hold for 5 seconds.
  - Lower slowly back to the bed.
- Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.



## Arm Raises

- Clasp hands.
- Lift hands over head and lower.

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.

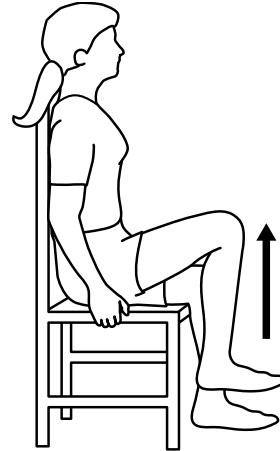


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## Chair Marching

- Lift your knee up towards chest and slowly lower.

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each leg.

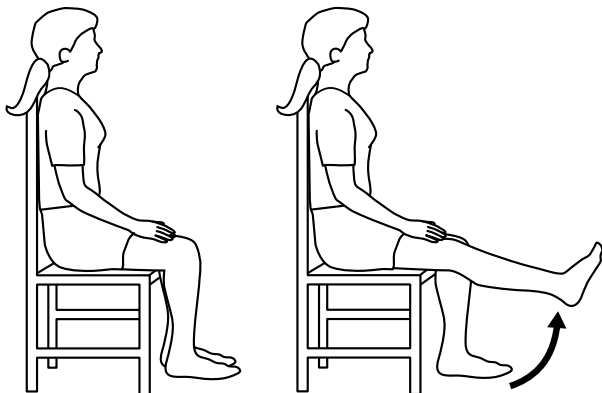


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## Kicks

- Lift your foot up and hold knee straight for 3 seconds, then slowly lower.

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each leg.

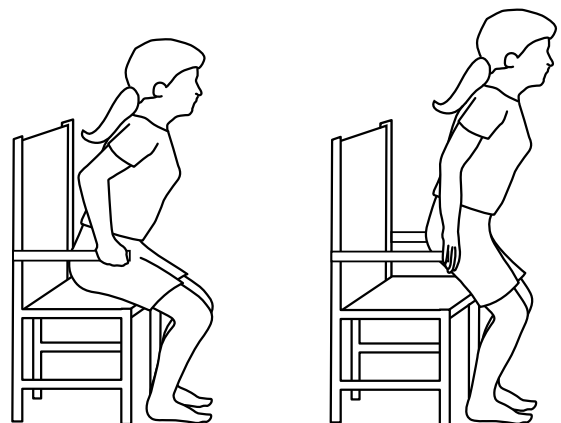


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## Stand-Ups

- Stand up out of a chair, then sit down. Do not press legs against back of chair.

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.

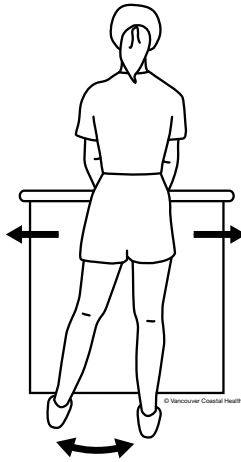


© Vancouver Coastal Health

## ☐ Sideways Step

- Holding lightly onto a table, stand with your feet together.
- Step to the side then move the other to join it.
- Repeat in the opposite direction

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each leg.



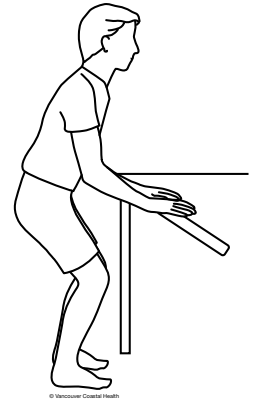
## ☐ Knee Bends

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart, holding lightly onto a table.
- Keep your heels on the floor at all times.
- Push hips back and bend knees as if starting to sit down.
- Bend your knees half way to sitting. Do not let your knee go past your toes.

Hold \_\_\_\_ seconds.

- Slowly straighten to standing.

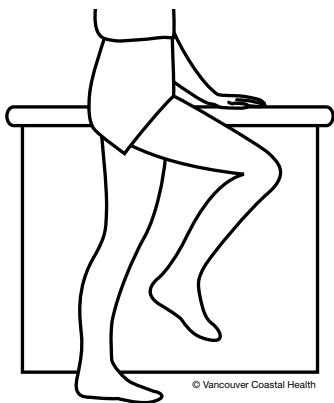
Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each leg.



## ☐ Marching

- Stand, holding lightly onto a table.
- Lift your leg up and hold \_\_\_\_ seconds.
- Slowly lower your leg down.

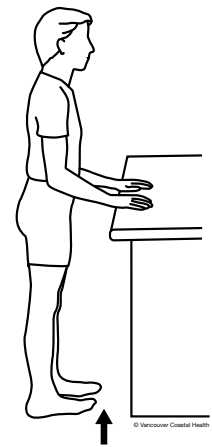
Repeat \_\_\_\_ times with each leg



## ☐ Heel and Toe Raises

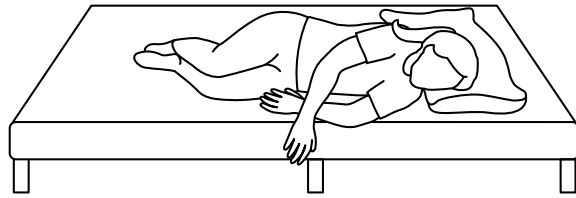
- Stand, holding lightly onto a table.
- Rise up on toes, then slowly lower your heels to the ground.
- Lift your toes off the ground, then slowly lower your toes back to the ground.

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.



## □ Getting out of bed

- Bend knees up.
- Roll to your side.
- Bring feet forward off bed.
- Push up with your arms into sitting.



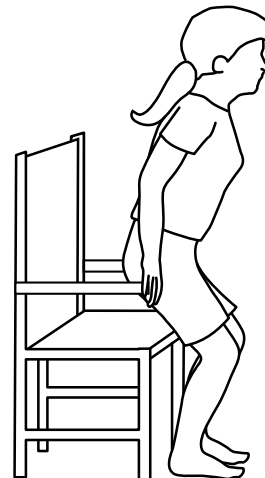
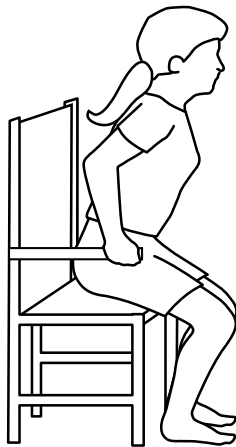
## □ Getting in and out of a chair

### Getting up

- Slide forward to edge of chair.
- Place feet back behind knees.
- Place hands on arm rests or bed.
- Sit up tall, look up.
- Lean forward and push up to stand.
- DO NOT pull on walker to stand,
- After you are standing, reach for walker.

### Sitting down

- Turn around and back up until you feel both legs against the chair.
- Reach your arms back to the arm rests or bed.
- Lean forward, bend your knees as you sit and use your arms to help lower.



# Breathing Exercises

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Gradually increasing your activity is one of the best things you can do to help your breathing.

Sitting upright and moving around helps your lungs expand fully and clears out mucous.

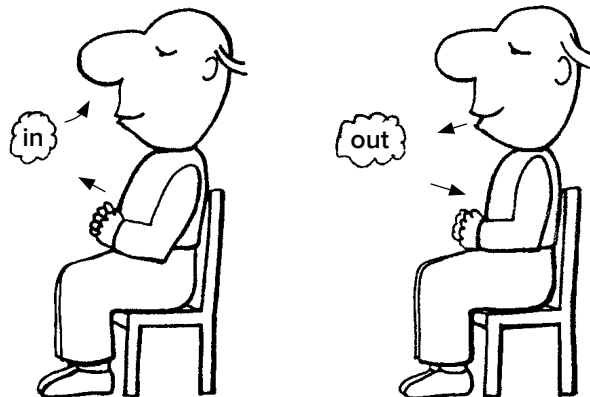
Breathing exercises, if indicated, should be individualized. These may be provided by a therapist and could include:

- Deep breathing with forced expiration
- Deep breathing + hold
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Pursed lip breathing
- Breathing control

If you are dealing with ongoing breathlessness and/or fatigue that is stable or slowly improving, energy conservation techniques may help you better manage daily activities. If these symptoms are worsening, please contact your health care provider to review.

## Energy saving strategies include:

- Prioritizing activities
  - Decide which activities are most important and focus energy on those
- Planning your time
  - Plan your day and week to improve efficiency and allow for rest breaks
- Simplifying tasks
  - Break tasks into smaller chunks, delegate hard tasks to others, or use tools to help
- Pacing yourself
  - Work at a slow and steady pace and monitor for signs of fatigue





# Coping with COVID-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic can cause stress and anxiety because it is disrupting normal life for many people all at once. While it is important to be informed and to take action to limit the spread of infection, the amount of information and attention on this topic can increase stress and anxiety. Here are some ideas to help manage worry, anxiety and stress in these uncertain times.

## **Accept that some anxiety and fear is normal:**

COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning about it. The uncertainty and the changes that are unfolding can make most people feel a bit anxious. This is normal, and it can actually help motivate us to take action to protect ourselves and others, and to learn more about the pandemic.

## **Separate what is in your control from what is not:**

There are things you can do, and it is helpful to focus on those. Wash your hands. Practice physical-social distancing. Limit your consumption of news (once per day or less if you can) and stick to reputable sources such as the World Health Organization, Government of Canada, and BC Centre for Disease Control.

## **Stay in the present:**

Perhaps your worry is compounding – you are not only thinking about what is currently happening, but also projecting into the future. When you find yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened, gently bring yourself back to the present moment. Notice the sights, sounds, tastes, and other sensory experiences in your immediate moment and name them. Engaging in mindfulness activities is one way to help stay grounded when things feel beyond our control.

## **Use practical ways to relax:**

Relax your body often by doing things that work for you – take deep breaths, stretch, meditate, or take a walk outside. Make time to unwind. Engage in some other activities you enjoy. You can also use the exercises included in this package.

## **Stay connected:**

Talk with loved ones and friends about your concerns and how you are feeling. Enjoy conversation unrelated to the outbreak.

Remind yourself of the many important and positive things in your lives. If you are not able to see loved ones face-to-face think about other safe ways of connecting (e.g. phone, Facetime).

## **Stick to a normal routine:**

As much as possible stick to a normal routine – wake up times, personal hygiene, regular meals and hydration. Keep alcohol and substances to a minimum.

## **Reach out if you need more support:**

If you are feeling particularly anxious or if you are struggling with your mental health, reach out to a mental health professional for support. You do not have to be alone with your worry and it can be comforting to share what you are experiencing with those trained to help.

Primary care provider Personalized Support and Stabilization (PSS) Team Mental Health Support Line: 604-310-6789  
Vancouver Coastal Distress Line: 604-872-3311  
[CrisisCentreChat.ca](https://www.crisiscentrechat.ca)

# Calm Breathing Exercise

Imagine you have a balloon in your stomach and when you breathe in you are going to blow that balloon up, so your stomach will expand. And when you breathe out, the air in the balloon will also go out, so your stomach will flatten.

Now you try to breathe from your stomach. Start by breathing out until all the air is out; then breathe in. If you can, try and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Now the second step is to slow the rate of your breathing down. Take three seconds to breathe in, then two seconds to hold your breath, and three seconds to breathe out.

Breathe in, 1, 2, 3. Hold, 1, 2. And breathe out, 1, 2, 3.

[Repeat this breathing exercise for approximately five minutes].

For an audio-guide of this exercise, follow these steps:

- Download the free **Breathe2Relax** app on an Apple iOS or Google Play device
- Open the app and select the “Breathe” option at the bottom of the screen
- The app will guide you through a calm breathing exercise (note: you can adjust the length of the inhale and exhale to your own comfort)

# 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise

Grounding is a technique that helps keep someone in the present, and can be helpful for managing overwhelming feelings or emotional distress. This grounding exercise involves sensory awareness and can help you regain your mental focus from an intensely emotional state.

## Procedure:

1. Name 5 things you can see in the room right now.
2. Name 4 things you can physically feel right now.
3. Name 3 things you can hear right now.
4. Name 2 things you can smell right now.
5. Name 1 good thing about yourself.

Repeat the 5 steps once more if needed.



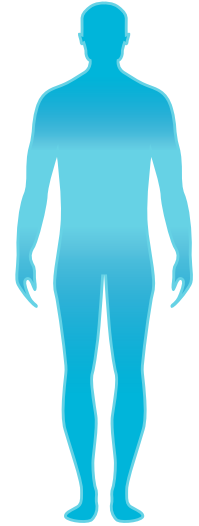
For an audio-guide of this exercise, follow these steps:

- Go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com)
- Search for “5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique”
- Select “**5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise – Mindfulness for Anxiety**”  
[youtube.com/watch?v=5cEUenMhMoY&t=2s](https://youtube.com/watch?v=5cEUenMhMoY&t=2s)

# Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercise

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that is used to help manage stress and anxiety. It involves tensing particular muscles and then releasing them. During this exercise, each muscle should be tensed, but not to the point of strain. If you have any injuries or pain, you can skip the affected areas. Pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation.

First get into a comfortable position. When you are ready, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you feel the tension but not to the point of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds. Then, relax the muscle and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds.



## Relaxation sequence:

1. **Left foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
2. **Left lower leg.** Pull your toes towards you to stretch your calf muscle.
3. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
4. **Right lower leg.** Pull your toes towards you to stretch your calf muscle.
5. **Thighs.** Squeeze your two thighs together.
6. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles.
7. **Chest and stomach.** Tighten your stomach muscles.
8. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your hand.
9. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder.
10. **Left hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your hand.
11. **Left upper arm.** Bring your left forearm up to your shoulder.
12. **Upper back.** Push your shoulder blades together.
13. **Shoulders.** Bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
14. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can.
15. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes shut.
16. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go.

For an audio-guide of this exercise, follow these steps:

- Download the free **MindShift** app on an Apple iOS or Google Play device
- Open the app and select the “Chill Zone” option at the bottom of the screen
- Select the “Tense and Release” exercise

# Calming Imagery Exercise

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Calming imagery exercises involve generating mental images that re-create calming sensations including sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and touch.

To begin, sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Take a few slow breaths.

Now imagine that you are walking down a path into a lush forest. As you walk along the path you completely take in the sights, sounds, smells, and feel of the place. All around you are trees, grasses, and fragrant flowers. You hear the soothing sounds of birds chirping and the wind as it gently blows through the treetops. You smell the rich dampness of the forest floor. Through gaps in the treetops you see the sun high in a blue sky. The sun is dispersed through the canopy of the treetops and filters down onto the forest floor, creating intricate patterns of light and shadow. With each breath you take in this place, you feel a deep sense of peace and relaxation.



You soon come to a clearing. There are several flat rocks in the clearing surrounded by soft moss. A small stream runs among the rocks. You lie back on the cushiony moss and put your feet into the cool water. You feel the warm sun and a gentle, light breeze through your hair and across your skin. The sparkling clear water rushes around the multicolored rocks, making little whirlpools. You put your hand into the water and lift a handful to your lips. The water is cool and refreshing. You close your eyes and listen to the water trickling through the rock. You bathe in the warm sun and feel as though you are floating... relaxing deeper and deeper.

You let yourself sink further into relaxation, while continuing to be aware of the sights, smells, sounds, and feel of the forest around you. You allow yourself to let go of any concerns or worries and to feel completely refreshed and rejuvenated in this place.

When you are ready, imagine that you slowly get up and leave the clearing. As you walk back down the path through the forest, fully take in this place and realize that you may return whenever you wish by the same path. Each time you enter this place you will feel relaxed and at peace.

For an audio-guide of this exercise, follow these steps:

- Download the free **MindShift** app on an Apple iOS or Google Play device
- Open the app and select the “Chill Zone” option at the bottom of the screen
- Select the “Mental Vacation” exercise

# Mindful Hand Massage

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This exercise has a double purpose:

- 1) Self-care
- 2) Relaxation and refocusing attention

During the pandemic you will have to wash your hands several times during the day. The unfortunate result is dry hands that require moisturizing. Mindful means giving your full attention to the activity you are doing. In these times of uncertainty, it can be helpful to refocus your attention on concrete actions you can do.

- 1) Apply lotion to your left hand. Focus your attention on the feeling of the lotion being rubbed into your hand.
- 2) Exhale slowly for 5 seconds and pair your exhale with in-between finger rubbing. Focus your attention on your breathing and the sensations of your hands.
- 3) Inhale again for 5 seconds and pair your breathing with rubbing the back of your hands and wrists.
- 4) Exhale slowly for 5 seconds and pair your exhale with the action of rubbing your thumbs clasped in the opposite hand.
- 5) Inhale for 5 seconds and pair your breathing-in with rubbing your fingertips against the opposite palm
- 6) Repeat with your right hand.
- 7) Wipe off any excess lotion and take a moment to feel how your hands feel softer.



At every step of the process your attention should be fully focused on the sensations of massaging your hands and your breathing. Good job!

# Managing Distress with Senses

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Learning to relax and soothe yourself is very important for many reasons. When you're relaxed, your body feels better. It also functions in a healthier way. Your body is no longer in a state of constant emergency, preparing to either confront a stressful situation or run away from it. As a result, it's easier for your brain to think of healthier ways to cope with your problems.

Consider simple soothing activities that use your senses. These activities are meant to bring you a small amount of peace in your life. So, if one of these activities doesn't help you feel relaxed, or makes you feel worse, don't do it. Try something else. And remember, each one of us is different. Think about what works best for you and be willing to try something new.

## Self-Soothing Using Your Sense of Smell

Smell is a very powerful sense that can often trigger memories and make you feel a certain way. If smells soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of smell.

## Self-Soothing Using Your Sense of Vision

Vision is very important to humans. In fact, a large portion of our brain is devoted solely to our sense of sight. If sights soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of vision.

## Self-Soothing Using Your Sense of Hearing

Certain sounds can soothe us. Listening to gentle music, for example, may be relaxing. However, each one of us has our own preferences. You have to find what works best for you. If sounds soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of hearing.

## Self-Soothing Using Your Sense of Taste

Taste is also a very powerful sense. Our sensations of flavor can trigger memories and feelings. If tastes and flavours soothe you, come up with one self-soothing idea involving your sense of taste.

## 'Getting some Distance' from Worries

*During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may find yourself frequently worrying. These worries may be about your personal health, your family's safety, distressing information you are learning about the pandemic, and measures you need to take to stay safe and reduce spread of the virus. Some degree of fear and anxiety is normal. Sometimes we get tangled up with our thoughts – they feel relentless and colour how we think about the world and affect how we behave; if you find you are preoccupied by these worries or they are causing you distress, it may be helpful to 'get some distance' from upsetting thoughts. One useful technique involves, in essence, gently shifting your attention away from these worries.*

First, notice the thought. Instead of letting thoughts roll through your mind unchecked, pay attention to the specific worry thoughts that are coming up.

Next, simply label the thought. For example, "Ah, I am having another COVID worry", or "I am having the thought that \_\_\_\_\_."

Acknowledge the thought without judgment. We are typically not very good at 'thought-stopping' but we can accept that these thoughts will come and go, and we can choose not to spend time with a thought. You might even say to yourself "I don't have to focus on this right now" or "I don't have to spend time with this thought".

Next, gently guide your attention to the present. Focusing on your breath or another physical sensation (e.g., noticing your feet planted on the ground) is a useful way to guide your mind to the here-and-now, away from distressing thoughts.

Be gentle with yourself. Remember that you may need to do this multiple times, especially for thoughts that are persistent. That's ok – each time, try to complete the steps without judgment.

# Using Self-Encouraging Coping Thoughts

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During stressful times, it can be helpful to repeat encouraging words to keep us motivated or to help us endure the pain that we're experiencing. Often, this can be done with self-encouraging coping thoughts. Coping thoughts are reminders of how strong you've been in the past when you survived distressing situations, and they are also reminders of encouraging words that have given you strength. Coping thoughts are especially helpful when you first notice that you're feeling agitated, nervous, angry, or upset. If you can recognize your distress early on, you'll have a better chance of using one of these thoughts to help soothe yourself.

Here is a list of some coping thoughts that many people have found to be helpful. Check the ones that are helpful to you and/or create your own:

- "This situation won't last forever."
- "I've already been through many other painful experiences, and I've survived."
- "This too shall pass."
- "My feelings make me uncomfortable right now, but I can accept them."
- "I can be anxious and still deal with the situation."
- "I'm strong enough to handle what's happening to me right now."
- "This is an opportunity for me to learn how to cope with my fears."
- "I can take all the time I need right now to let go and relax."
- "These are just my feelings, and eventually they'll go away."
- "It's okay to feel sad/anxious/afraid sometimes."
- "I can think different thoughts if I want to."
- "This situation sucks, but it's only temporary."
- Other ideas:

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# PATIENT STORIES PROJECT

*We want to hear your COVID-19 story*

COVID-19 is a new and ever changing experience for us all. We strive to improve our care for you, your family, and our staff by continuing to learn together. Our hope is that in answering the following questions and sharing your story with the team that looked after you, we can better understand and learn from your experience. Every story is unique, and all stories matter to us.

**Participation by patients, family members and caregivers is welcome, and involves answering the following questions. If you wish, please submit a couple recent pictures.**

1. **How did you feel when you found out you had COVID-19?**
2. **What happened when you were sick with COVID-19?**
3. **What has helped or inspired you during this time?**
4. **What is life like for you after having COVID-19?**
5. **What do you want people to learn from your story?**



Pictures submitted by Jaclyn Robinson from her COVID Patient Story

## To submit your story:

**Online:**

[tinyurl.com/COVIDpatientstories](https://tinyurl.com/COVIDpatientstories)

or Scan:

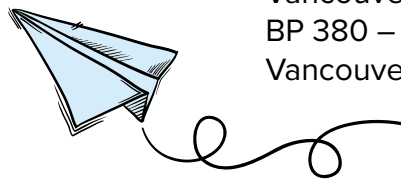


or **Email questions to:**

experience@vch.ca subject title "Patient Story"

or **Mail:**

Patient Experience  
 Medical Quality & Safety,  
 Vancouver Acute  
 BP 380 – 855 West 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
 Vancouver, BC, V5Z 1M9

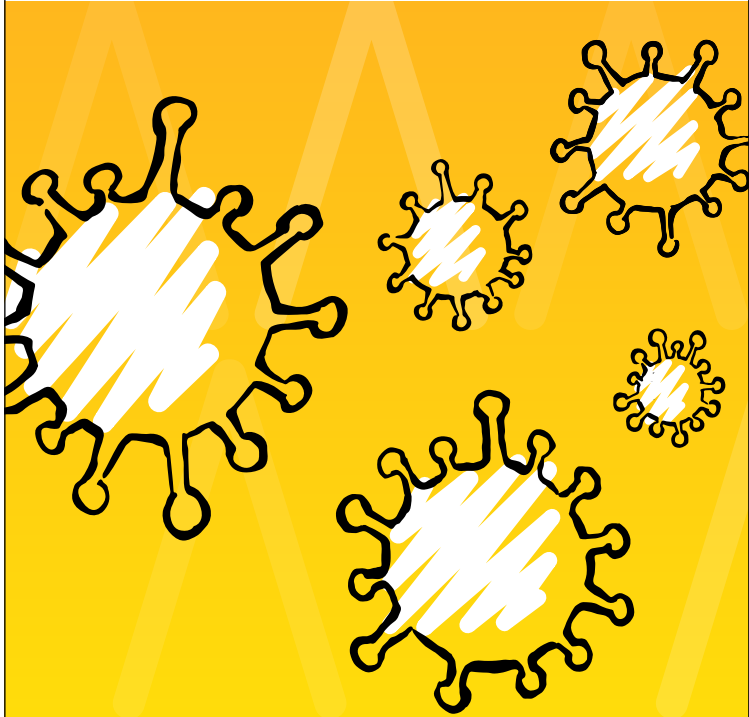


Your story will be shared with staff and may be shared through our various communications channels. Thank you for participating. If you have questions, please contact [experience@vch.ca](mailto:experience@vch.ca)

The confidentiality and privacy of our patients is of utmost importance to us. For more information, please review [tinyurl.com/COVIDpatientstories](https://tinyurl.com/COVIDpatientstories)

# Help fight COVID-19

Participate in COVID-19 research



Volunteer and sign up today!  
[www.REACHBC.ca](http://www.REACHBC.ca)

## REACHBC

An online platform connecting you  
to health research in BC.



## You can be the key to the next discovery in COVID-19 treatments and vaccines.

Researchers in BC are working hard to discover COVID-19 treatments and vaccines. Be part of the discovery – volunteer and sign up to participate in COVID-19 and other health research opportunities, and help advance health care for your family and your community.

### How REACH BC works

Connect with researchers in 3 simple steps:

- 1 Go to [www.REACHBC.ca](http://www.REACHBC.ca) and create a profile with your health research interests
- 2 Get matched and notified with research opportunities
- 3 Review and decide if you want to connect with the research team

## REACHBC

An online platform connecting you  
to health research in BC.

Volunteer and sign up today!

[www.REACHBC.ca](http://www.REACHBC.ca)

[info@reachbc.ca](mailto:info@reachbc.ca)



REACH BC is an initiative of BC's health authorities and partner universities.

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to whom it was given by the health care team.  
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Making better  
decisions together  
with patients  
and families