



Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health

COVID-19: Guidance for Sex Workers

May 3, 2020

We recognize that many sex workers will continue to meet clients in-person during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also acknowledge the considerable support sex workers are providing to each other during this difficult time. The BC Centre for Disease Control and the Ministry of Health have developed this guidance with a harm reduction lens to help reduce the risks associated with in-person contact in order to keep workers and clients as safe as possible from COVID-19 illness.

Risks of COVID-19 related to Sex Work

- The COVID-19 virus can be spread to people who are within 2 metres (about 6 ft) of a person who is infected when that person coughs or sneezes.
- The COVID-19 virus can also be passed by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the face, eyes, nose, or mouth.
- The virus that causes COVID-19 has not yet been found in semen or vaginal fluid, but it has been found in saliva or respiratory fluids, urine and feces.

COVID-19 Testing

- Testing for COVID-19 is recommended for anyone with cold, influenza or COVID-19-like symptoms, even mild ones. If a person does not have any symptoms, they do not require a test. A health care provider may also decide whether a person needs testing.
- The BC-COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool can be used to determine if further assessment is needed: <https://bc.thrive.health/>

General Recommendations

- Do not work if you have flu-like symptoms, for example, cough, sneezing, fever, sore throat, difficulty breathing. If you are sick, you should be self-isolating, see BC Centre for Disease Control's resource on [COVID-19 and sex for](#) more information. Self-isolation means staying in place and avoiding situations where you could come in contact with others.
- Wash your hands regularly with plain soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content. Antibacterial soap is NOT required.
- Cough into your elbow or cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you sneeze. Immediately dispose of all used tissues in an appropriate waste bin and wash your hands right away.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not share food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices, joints, or bongs.



Before a Date

- Ask your date if they are feeling sick, if they've been around others who are sick, and if they've travelled outside of Canada in the last two weeks.
- Wash your hands with plain soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content. Antibacterial soap is NOT required.
- Encourage your clients to wash their hands and face.
- If facilities are available, encourage clients to shower.
- Clean and disinfect all work surfaces, objects and tools. Cleaning products and disinfectants that are regularly used in households are strong enough to stop the prevent of COVID-19. Follow product instructions for dilution, contact time and safe use: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/CleaningDisinfecting_PublicSettings.pdf

Practice Safer Sex Work

Avoid	Instead Try...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● In-person sex work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Web-based, phone-based, or text-based services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Kissing, saliva exchange.● Mouth contact on skin.● Putting objects in your mouth (including your fingers) that have touched the client.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Erotic massage, strip-tease.● Positions that minimize face-to-face contact.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Direct contact with bodily fluids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Condoms, dental dams and gloves.

After a Date

- Wash your hands with plain soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content. Antibacterial soap is NOT required.
- Clean and disinfect all work surfaces, objects and tools. Cleaning products and disinfectants that are regularly used in households are strong enough to stop the prevent of COVID-19. Follow product instructions for dilution, contact time and safe use: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/CleaningDisinfecting_PublicSettings.pdf
- Wash and dry sheets and towels in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Use the warmest possible water settings. Dry all items thoroughly.



List of disinfecting agents and their working concentrations known to be effective against coronaviruses^{1,2}:

Agent and concentration	Uses
1. 1:100 dilution Chlorine: household bleach – sodium hypochlorite (5.25%)* 10 ml bleach to 990 ml water	Used for disinfecting surfaces (e.g., hand railings, grab handles, door knobs, cupboard handles). Make fresh daily and allow surface to air dry naturally.
2. 1:50 dilution Chlorine: household bleach - sodium hypochlorite (5.25%)* 20 ml bleach to 980 ml water	Used for disinfecting surfaces contaminated with bodily fluids and waste like vomit, diarrhoea, mucus, or feces (after cleaning with soap and water first). Make fresh daily and allow surface to air dry naturally.
3. Hydrogen Peroxide 0.5%	Used for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces (e.g., counters, hand rails, door knobs).
4. Quaternary Ammonium Compounds (QUATs): noted as 'alkyl dimethyl ammonium chlorides' on the product label	Used for disinfecting surfaces (e.g., floors, walls, furnishings).

¹ Dellanno, Christine, Quinn Vega, and Diane Bosenberg. "The antiviral action of common household disinfectants and antiseptics against murine hepatitis virus, a potential surrogate for SARS coronavirus." *American journal of infection control* 37.8 (2009): 649-652.

² Provincial Infection Prevention Control Network of British Columbia. "Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines for Providing Healthcare to Clients Living in the Community." (2014). https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/PICNet_Home_and_Community_Care_Guidelines_2014_.pdf

STI Testing

- Due to COVID-19, most STI clinics have reduced hours, are not offering routine testing, and are only seeing clients with symptoms or urgent needs. Call ahead to check.
- [Get Checked Online](#) is available for referral to LifeLabs locations, which may have reduced hours due to COVID-19.

Suggestions for Clients

- Stay home if you have symptoms, have had contact with individuals who are confirmed cases of COVID-19, or have travelled within the last 14 days and do not engage in physical sexual encounters.
- Use the [BC COVID-19 Symptoms Self-Assessment Tool](#) to determine if you may need further assessment or testing for COVID-19.



Additional Resources

- COVID-19 and Sex Work
 - [COVID-19 and sex](#)
 - [Sex Work and COVID-19](#)
 - [COVID-19 and People Who Use Substance](#)
- STI Testing
 - [GetCheckedOnline](#)
 - [12th Avenue Clinic](#)
- [WISH](#) or call 604-669-9474
 - [MAP Outreach Van](#) (window-service only). Call or text 604-720-5686
 - [Bad Date Reporting](#)
- [PACE Society](#) or call 604-872-7651
 - [Pace Sex Worker Relief Fund](#)
- [SWAN](#) or call or text 719 6343 or 778 865 6343
- [PEERS](#)
- [HUSTLE \(self-identified men, non-binary, and two-spirit\)](#)
- BC Centre for Disease Control [COVID-19 information](#)

