

What Do We Know and What Can We Do about COVID-19?

Before you read further, remember that information, advice, restrictions and regulations are changing rapidly – in some cases more than once a day. As of the morning of March 16, here is information useful to residential rental housing owners and managers.

“Community transmission” means the passing of the virus from one person to another. It transfers via droplets from coughing, sneezing, even speaking.

“Social distancing” means staying at least one metre (some say two) away from other people as the droplets can’t travel beyond that distance.

The virus can enter another person through eyes, nose, or mouth. It does not transmit through skin contact. Virus droplets remain transferrable on metal surfaces, sometimes beyond a day.

Canada’s public health experts and authorities are encouraging everyone to:

- Avoid personal contact such as hugging, shaking hands, etc. Greet people with an “elbow bump.”
- Avoid close contact with people who are ill or expressing flu-like symptoms, including a dry cough or fever.
- Wash your hands often for at least 20 seconds with soap and hot water.
- Try to avoid touching your face, particularly your eyes, nose and mouth (we unconsciously do so a few times a minute).
- Do not rely on social media for information. Go to reliable sources such as your local health authority or the BC Centre for Disease Control: bccdc.ca

If you are feeling ill, do not go to a medical clinic or hospital emergency room. You may unnecessarily tie up overtaxed medical personnel and/or contract the virus from or pass it to others. Instead phone 811 and talk to a nurse about your symptoms – and follow the nurse’s advice. 811 is being overtaxed as well, so you may have to wait for a while.



We suggest you print or cut and paste everything above and send/give to your residents. What follows addresses the question of “What Can We Do” from a rental housing owner/manager’s perspective.

First, make sure any buildings or areas accessible by tenants and their guests are cleaned frequently. Items that have consistent contact by a number of people, such as door handles, elevator buttons, faucets, sinks, etc. should probably be cleaned with a disinfecting cleaner more than once a day.

Fitness rooms and playground equipment should also be frequently cleaned, depending on use. We don’t recommend closing a playground, social rom, fitness centre, etc. at this point. That may become advisable. Closing a swimming pool now may be prudent

Place hand cleaners with at least a 60% alcohol content in social rooms, public washrooms, fitness centres, and laundry rooms. We recommend placing a note on the doors of laundry rooms, fitness centre, etc. recommending that users follow the social distancing advice.

Make sure your office and surroundings are kept clean, particularly areas accessible by others. Have a hand cleaner containing available and encourage anyone who comes to your office to use it as soon as they enter.

According to some psychologists, panic/hysteria accompanies any widespread situation that can negatively affect people, hence people wearing masks that will not protect them, buying excessive quantities of toilet paper, hand cleaner, etc. You can ease this panic by good communication with your residents (see above).

The health and preventive measures should of course be everyone's #1 concern. #2 is the question of what to do about rent payments if employed residents are laid off or have their working hours reduced. We can't advise whether to insist on rent being paid on time, provide a grace period, or allow residents to pay no or partial rent until they are back to work. Those are difficult decisions you have to make.

Prime Minister Trudeau is supposed to announce financial assistance measures for people in these situations on March 18th. Depending on what these are, Premier Horgan may follow with what the BC government will do. There are rent banks (short term loans) available in some areas; commercial banks and credit unions may ease short term borrowing requirements; residents may be able to turn to other resources, such as family or friends. Banks and credit unions may also ease or defer requirements for monthly mortgage payments.

What is important is to remember that your building is your residents' home; they rely on you to ensure they can continue to rely on the stability of that home just the same as you do for your home.

We will keep you informed via email as we learn anything relevant and important.

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