

AV0900 – MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE TO COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dākelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, Syilx, and Tsilhqot'in Nations, where we live, learn, collaborate and work together.

Interior Health recognizes that diversity in the workplace shapes values, attitudes, expectations, perception of self and others and in turn impacts behaviors in the workplace. The dimensions of a diverse workplace includes the protected characteristics under the human rights code of: race, color, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, criminal or summary conviction unrelated to employment.

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to manage Occupational Exposure to Communicable Diseases to mitigate the Risk of transmission and Risk of infection for an exposed person. Interior Health's (IH) guidelines for the management of occupational exposures to Communicable Disease reflect [Part 6 – BC Occupational Health and Safety \(BC OHS\) Regulations Biological Agents, Sections 6.33 – 6.40](#), the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\) Communicable Disease Control Manual](#), and the [IH Tuberculosis Protocols Toolkit](#).

This policy addresses exposure to Communicable Diseases that could be acquired at work, with the exception of bloodborne pathogens, which are covered in [AV0300 Management of Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids](#).

2.0 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
<i>Biological Agent:</i>	<i>For the purpose of this policy, an organism, which is known to be (or is reasonably believed to be) capable of causing disease in humans. The materials are classified as Risk Group 2, 3 or 4 by the Public Health Agency of Canada.</i>
<i>Communicable Disease (CD):</i>	<i>An infectious disease transmissible from person to person via direct contact with an individual or their body fluids or by indirect means such as droplets, vectors (mosquitoes or ticks) or airborne.</i>
<i>Employee:</i>	<i>A person currently employed by Interior Health in a full-time, part-time, casual, and/or term-specific position., including managers, medical staff, other health care professionals, researchers, and students.</i>
<i>Vaccination:</i>	<i>The safe and appropriate administration of a vaccine by licensed professionals to stimulate the body's own</i>

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	<i>immune system to protect the individual against Communicable Diseases in the event of an exposure.</i>
<i>Non-IH Worker:</i>	<i>A healthcare worker not employed by IH but who provides patient care or works in institutions that provide patient care on behalf of IH (e.g., contracted physicians, students, volunteers, contractors, or other health authority/services employees).</i>
<i>Occupational Exposure:</i>	<i>For the purpose of this policy, this is an exposure to a Communicable Disease as the result of conducting work-related duties. This is often due to delayed disease identification or a breach in Personal Protective Equipment.</i>
<i>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):</i>	<i>As it applies to this policy, PPE is defined as equipment or clothing that is worn to minimize exposure to Communicable Disease. PPE acts as a barrier but does not eliminate the Risk. Examples of PPE include a medical mask or a gown.</i>
<i>Risk:</i>	<i>The possibility of an incident happening that impacts workers' health and safety. The level of Risk created by an incident is determined by analyzing the combined impact of likelihood (probability) and consequences (magnitude or severity) of exposure.</i>
<i>Vaccination:</i>	<i>The safe and appropriate administration of a vaccine by licensed professionals to stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the individual against Communicable Diseases in the event of an exposure.</i>

3.0 POLICY

3.1 Scope

This policy applies to all Employees and Non-IH Workers.

3.2 Overview

IH acknowledges that exposure to Communicable Diseases (CD) in the workplace is an occupational hazard in healthcare and is committed to providing a safe environment for Employees and Non-IH Workers. IH supports this commitment through the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives that support this policy as part of the [Occupational Health and Safety Program \(AV0100\)](#). This policy is also supported by the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).

When the Risk of exposure to Communicable Disease cannot be eliminated, any planned interventions and responses will prioritize the health and safety of

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Employees and Non-IH Workers by decreasing the Risk as low as reasonably practicable.

3.3 Policy Statements

- 3.3.1 There is a shared responsibility among everyone to promote, support and engage in a culture of safety within the organization.
- 3.3.2 Employees and Non-IH Workers must stay home when sick.
 - Employees must report their absence using the Employee Absence Reporting Line ([EARL](#)).
 - Non-IH Workers must report their absence following employer or educational institution's internal guidelines.

Employees and Non-IH Workers are to follow guidelines to determine when able to return to work:

 - [Provincial Guidance on Return to Work and Exposure Management for Health Care Workers with Viral Respiratory Illness](#)
 - [Gastrointestinal Infection Outbreak Guidelines for Healthcare Facilities](#) – Section 8.0 Health Care Provider Exposure and Illness
 - [Varicella Zoster Virus – Management in Health Care Settings](#)
 - [BCCDC – Chapter 1 - Management of Specific Diseases - Measles](#)
- 3.3.3 Employees are required to report their Vaccine and immunity status or decision to decline Vaccinations. Refer to the [Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting Guideline](#).
- 3.3.4 Non-IH Workers are required to report their Vaccine and immunity status per their employer or educational institution's internal guidelines.
- 3.3.5 In the event of an exposure or outbreak of a vaccine-preventable Communicable Disease, Employees and Non-IH Workers who are unable to provide documentation of an immune status may be excluded from work for the period of communicability as outlined by the BCCDC Communicable Disease Manual or as determined by the Medical Health Officer and M
- 3.3.6 In the event of an exposure, the PWHCC will provide post-exposure management and follow up to Employees.
- 3.3.7 In the event of an exposure, the Communicable Disease Unit will provide post-exposure management and follow up to Non-IH Workers.
- 3.3.8 To manage exposure and mitigate Risk of transmission and infection, Employees and Non-IH Workers must report Communicable Disease exposure incidents.
 - Employees report to supervisor and the Provincial Workplace Health Contact Centre (1-866-922-9464).
 - Non-IH Workers report to IH supervisor and employer or educational institution via their internal guidelines.

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- 3.3.9 Managers must investigate all reported communicable disease exposures as per the Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation policy ([AV1100](#)).

3.4 Education and Training

- 3.4.1 Employees must receive and complete education and training in Communicable Disease prevention strategies appropriate to the level of Risk inherent to their work.
- 3.4.2 Non-IH Workers must receive and complete education and training in Communicable Disease prevention strategies appropriate to the level of Risk inherent to their work from their employer or academic institution.
- 3.4.3 New and returning Employees are to receive orientation to Communicable Disease prevention, ([New Employee Orientation: i-Learn 977](#)).
- 3.4.4 Employees working in direct patient care roles or who have any exposure to Biological Agents are to complete:
- [i-Learn 1634: Biological Agents 1](#)
 - [i-Learn 1635: Biological Agents 2](#)
- 3.4.5 Employees and Non-IH Workers at Risk for an Occupational Exposure to an airborne contaminant must be fit-tested as defined in the IH Respiratory Protection Policy ([AV1900](#)) and the IH Respiratory Protection Program.

4.0 PROCEDURES

Follow procedures as well as roles and responsibilities as outlined in the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#) and the Occupational Health and Safety Program ([AV0100](#)).

Refer to the [Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting Guideline](#) for reporting guidance.

5.0 RESOURCES

1. [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#)
2. [Occupational Health](#) (InsideNet)
3. [Respiratory and Gastrointestinal Infection Long-term Care Outbreak Guideline](#)
4. [IH Outbreak Acute Guideline Toolkit](#)
5. HealthLinkBC – [Immunization for health care workers in BC](#)

6.0 RELATED POLICIES

6. [AU1100 – Student Placements](#)
7. [AV0100 – Occupational Health & Safety Program](#)
8. [AV0300 – Management of Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids](#)
9. [AV1100 – Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation](#)
10. [AV1350 – Influenza Prevention Policy](#)

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11. [AVI900 – Respiratory Protection Program Policy](#)
12. [VD0700 – Communicable Disease Outbreak](#)

7.0 REFERENCES

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