

INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS OR ALCOHOL AND ARE AT RISK OF WITHDRAWAL, OVERDOSE, AND OTHER HARMS

Public health officials are advising everyone to reduce their time in public spaces, reduce physical contact with others, and maintain a physical separation of 2 metres (i.e., two arms' lengths) distance. Buying drugs or alcohol may put you in situations where you contact others, and this could increase your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19. Over time, as the pandemic continues, the drug supply may also become more toxic and harder to access.

Your doctor or nurse practitioner (NP) can help you make a plan to reduce your contact with others, reduce the need to purchase drugs or alcohol, and help prevent you from going into withdrawal.

WHAT ARE SOME OPTIONS?

You and your health care provider (doctor or nurse practitioner) should discuss your needs and circumstances and determine a care plan. Options may include:

- **Creating a treatment plan together**
 - *Reduce in-person contact for your care (for example, providing longer prescriptions so you don't have to see your provider in person)*
 - *Explore options for fewer pharmacy visits (for example, longer carries, where clinically appropriate)*
 - *Determine what to do if your pharmacy is closed so you can stay on your medication*
- **Treatment with medication**
(for example, Suboxone for opioid use disorder or naltrexone for alcohol use disorder)
- **Creating a plan to avoid withdrawal**
(for example, self-managing alcohol intake)
- **Prescribing non-traditional medications to replace illicit use**
(for example, prescribed opioids, benzodiazepines, or stimulants)
- **Connecting with other resources**
(for example, a managed alcohol program or nicotine replacement therapy)

If you drink alcohol:

- Do not quit drinking “cold turkey” if you have alcohol use disorder or drink large amounts of alcohol regularly. This can cause withdrawal symptoms, which can be very dangerous and potentially deadly. Talk to your health care provider about how to avoid withdrawal.

The BCCSU has published new interim clinical guidance to support prescribers with this, which is available here: www.bccsu.ca/covid-19.

WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new disease. Scientists believe it is spread by:

- Breathing in the droplets spread when a person coughs or sneezes near you
- Touching a person who has COVID-19 or an object or surface with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes

Our governments and health care providers are trying to reduce the number of people who are getting sick. While we're still learning more about COVID-19, we know that symptoms can range from mild (like cough or fever) to severe (like pneumonia and requiring hospitalization).

You can lower your risk of getting COVID-19 by washing your hands regularly, not touching your face, keeping 2 metres (2 arms' lengths) away from other people, and staying home/limiting contact with others if you feel sick.

RESOURCES

If a person thinks they have COVID-19:

- Access the Ministry of Health self-assessment tool [here](#).
- Call **811** to talk to someone about symptoms or get medical advice. They will provide further information and instructions on what to do next.

For non-medical information about COVID-19:

- Call **1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319)** or text **604-630-0300** from 7:00 am to 8:30 pm every day to get information about physical distancing and what kinds of support, resources, and assistance are available from the provincial and federal governments.
- Access general information about COVID-19 including symptoms and prevention strategies [here](#).

The BC Centre for Disease Control has information for people who use substances [here](#).