



Initial Communicable Disease Plan

Learn about our role in the prevention and control of communicable diseases.



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Initial Communicable Disease Plan

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Introduction

This Communicable Disease Plan is designed to promote the health and safety of Institute employees and students by providing information that can be used to prevent the contraction and spread of communicable diseases and the appropriate response to a communicable disease outbreak. A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another.

The NVIT Leadership Team in conjunction with Health and Safety, Human Resources and Communications & Marketing will alert the campus community when there is a communicable disease threat affecting members of the NVIT community.

NVIT's communicable disease prevention, mitigation, and response activities are guided by the Communicable Disease Safety Plan. In the event of an emergency, NVIT will work with the Interior Health Authority, notify the NVIT community of the emergency, take actions to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, and visitors, and provide additional guidance if necessary.

Scope

Communicable diseases falling within the scope of this Plan are those typically caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi, or parasites and normally spread through direct or indirect human contact or through the consumption of contaminated food/water. Examples of communicable diseases include but are not limited to:

- Coronavirus
- Hepatitis A
- Norovirus
- Influenza
- Measles
- Meningococcal Meningitis
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Tuberculosis
- Prevent

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease transmission in the workplace. Vaccines, antibiotics, antivirals, innate immunity, and/or acquired immunity can provide some protection

against certain communicable diseases. Not all communicable diseases are treatable, nor are current treatments guaranteed to protect against a communicable disease. Therefore, it is important to limit the spread of a communicable disease before it has the potential to cause serious illness/disease by implementing the additional measures:

- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer frequently.
- Use proper cough sneeze etiquette.
- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces.
- Practice a healthy lifestyle; exercise, eat a balanced diet, and get sufficient sleep.
- Handle and prepare food safely: keep foods at a correct temperature, cook foods (especially meat) thoroughly, wash produce, and observe expiration dates.
- Follow universal precautions when working with bloodborne pathogens.
- Avoid public places, work, or school when sick to prevent the spread of communicable disease
- Maintain appropriate immunizations and vaccinations based upon the region in which you live and work, and your exposure.

Faculty and staff should familiarize themselves with health benefits available through their NVIT benefits plan, for more information connect with Ashley Nickel at anickel@nvit.ca

Identify

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases, including COVID-19, may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within the workplace. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of a communicable disease and understanding the modes of transmission is the first step in reducing the incidence of disease associated with communicable diseases. Signs and symptoms will vary depending on the disease, but common characteristics associated at the onset of most communicable diseases typically include fever and other flu-like symptoms: achiness, upset stomach, fatigue, fever, and headaches. When traveling abroad, be aware of communicable disease threats; certain communicable diseases are endemic to certain regions of the world.

Plan

It is important to have a plan in place within your unit or department to respond to staffing and other business issues that may arise during a communicable disease emergency or whenever employees are unable to attend work due to illness. A unit plan should address:

- Designate employees who will work during a communicable disease emergency either onsite or at an alternate location (including home).
- Cross train staff to provide levels of backup for critical positions.
- Develop telework agreements with those staff who may have to work from home or an alternate location.
- Create a working group to discuss other potential department-specific issues that may arise during an emergency and prepare for them (e.g. impact of a communicable disease on a conference or other planned event, the potential need for ad-hoc telework (for those whose symptoms have subsided and may want to begin working again but cannot return to the workplace as yet)).

Respond

The following procedures should be followed whenever a communicable disease emergency such as a regional communicable disease outbreak, pandemic, or public health emergency is declared by local, provincial or national officials. For all other routine, seasonal, or individual health issues, consult your healthcare provider. Routine, seasonal, and individual health issues DO NOT need to be reported to NVIT unless advised to do so by your healthcare provider.

EMPLOYEES

Faculty or staff who are diagnose with or believe they have a communicable disease should:

- Seek medical attention if necessary.
- Inform your Supervisor, Health & Safety, and Human Resources of your condition or diagnosis and relay
 - and pertinent information provided by your
 - healthcare provider.
- Support staff and students who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g., fever or chills, coughing, diarrhea) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
- Stay home when sick and avoid close contact with others to the extent possible.
 - Do not return to work until advised to do so by a health care professional or, in the absence of medical consultation, do not return tot work for the duration of the illness and 24-hours after symptoms abate;
 - Notify your supervisor; and
 - Record your time away from work as sick leave
- To limit the spread of communicable disease, avoid traveling when sick, unless otherwise deemed appropriate by a health care professional.

- Use antibiotics and antivirals appropriately and exactly as prescribed for the full duration of the prescription – do not self-medicate or share medicines with others.
- Maintain awareness of the situation and the progression and nature of the communicable disease emergency by monitoring reliable media outlets.
- Faculty: Arrange alternate teaching schedules to avoid cancellation of class when possible.

SUPERVISORS

Supervisors who become aware of an employee under the supervision who exhibits communicable disease symptoms or is diagnosed with a communicable disease must not release the employee's name, identifying information, or condition to other employees. All employee healthcare concerns must be forwarded to Human Resources. Supervisors and employees can contact Human Resources with any questions or concerns they may have regarding workplace issues surrounding communicable disease.

STUDENTS

A student who is diagnosed with or believes he/she has a communicable disease should:

- Seek medical attention from their primary care provider.
- Stay at home or within your residence room when sick and avoid close contact with others to the extent possible.
 - Do not return to class or work until advised to do so by a health care professional or for the duration of the illness and 24-hours after symptoms abate;
 - Notify your instructors, supervisor, and family as necessary.
- To limit the spread of a communicable disease, avoid traveling when sick, unless otherwise deemed appropriate by a health care professional.
- Use antibiotics and antivirals appropriately and exactly as prescribed for the full duration of the prescription – do not self-medicate or share medications with others.
- Maintain awareness of the situation and the progression and nature of the communicable disease by monitoring reliable media outlets.

RETURNING TO WORK/SCHOOL

Prior to returning to work or school, students and employees should take precautions to prevent spreading a communicable disease by ensuring that symptoms have passed. Remain at home if contagious, and, if necessary, consult a health care professional for guidance or clearance to return to work or school prior to returning to the institute. During an institute wide communicable disease outbreak, a written statement

indicating that students or employees may return to work or school from an attending physician or primary care provider may be required before returning to the institute.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All student and employee medical information is treated as private and confidential and will be handled in compliance with legal requirements and professional ethical standards.

Resources

For additional information about a specific communicable disease including symptoms, prevention, treatment, and communicable disease outbreak, please visit the following:

- BCCDC Communicable Disease Control Manual: [Communicable Disease Control Manual \(bccdc.ca\)](http://bccdc.ca)
- Interior Health Communicable Disease Control and Prevention: [Communicable Disease Control \(interiorhealth.ca\)](http://interiorhealth.ca)
- Your personal health care provider(s) or physician