

FNIHB-AB NIHB Medical Transportation and Hygiene during COVID-19 Pandemic

This directive is intended to provide recommendations to communities regarding measures to take in providing medical transportation of clients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ideally, symptomatic, suspected and confirmed COVID-19 positive clients should transport themselves or be transported by a household contact.

How coronavirus spreads

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- droplets made when you cough, sneeze, sing or laugh
- having close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

Symptoms are similar to what you may get with influenza or other respiratory illnesses. COVID-19 symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

Most common symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, shortness of breath and/or difficulty breathing.

Less common symptoms: chills, painful swallowing, headache, joint and muscle aches, tiredness (mild or severe), nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, not feeling hungry, loss of sense of smell or taste and/or pink eye.

During the pandemic refer all clients to the nursing station or health centre to confirm advice on how the client should be transported while maintaining isolation and ensuring the most appropriate option available to the community. If a medical transportation driver is deemed to be the most appropriate option for transporting a COVID-19 patient refer to PPE chart below:

- Consult the Community Health Nurse to access training for putting on and taking off the listed PPE.
- Concerns regarding unprotected exposure should be directed to 811 Alberta Health Link or a Community Health Nurse
- If client and escort cannot wear a procedure mask, consult the Medical Transport Coordinator with regards to alternate arrangements.

Drivers, clients, and escorts should at all times:

- Follow good hand hygiene, washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or, if water not available, apply hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or more) and rub until hands are dry.
- Avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue, or their sleeve if a tissue is not available, and not their hands. Dispose of tissue in a no-touch waste receptacle and wash their hands afterwards.
- Maintain physical distancing (2 metres or more).



Transport Procedures and Safety Precautions

1. Supplies

Ensure each vehicle is **supplied with**:

- If possible, a physical barrier, such as Plexiglass shield, must be installed between the driver and back passenger seats
- Seats or seat covers made of a smooth and non-absorbent material (e.g. vinyl or leather) which is free from breaks, cracks, open seams, chops, pits and similar imperfections.
 - If seats or seat covers are fabric, then disposable seat covers must be used and changed between each passenger
- Small garbage bin with liners and lid; if possible, use a non-touch garbage bin. If not available, individuals should apply hand sanitizer after touching the lid.
- Alcohol based hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or more) – at least 2 bottles: one for driver and one for the client(s) and escort(s)
- Disinfectant
- Personal Protective Equipment (disposable gown, disposable gloves, eye protection and procedure mask)
- Household soap/detergent
- Paper towels, tissues

If the client is known or suspected to have COVID-19 or has COVID-19 related symptoms the driver shall also have the following available:

- Disposable Gown
- Eye protection (goggles or face shield)
- Procedure mask
- Disposable Gloves

2. Review the following to determine if additional safety precautions are required for drivers, escorts and clients.

- Follow all precautionary instructions specified by the health professional or MT Coordinator.
- Upon arrival ask client if they have any signs or symptoms of illness
- Drivers, clients and escort(s) should clean their hands immediately before entering and exiting the vehicle, washing with soap and water or, if water is not immediately available, hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or higher).
- Ideally, place client (and escort) in seat furthest distance from driver to observe a **2 metre distance** if a Plexiglass barrier is not installed.
- Only transport one client (and their escort) at a time.

3. PPE Requirements for Transporting Clients

Staff	Activity	PPE required	
Medical Transportation Driver Consult with Medical Transport Coordinator regarding client's health status. Upon arrival ask if client has signs or symptoms of COVID-19	Transporting asymptomatic clients and escort that have no respiratory/COVID-19 symptoms	Procedure mask Eye protection	
	Transporting a client that has symptoms	with a Plexiglass barrier between driver and passengers and driver remains inside the vehicle	No PPE Required
		without a barrier between driver and passengers	Procedure mask Eye protection
		If driver has to assist client or direct contact or < 2m Separation	Procedure mask Eye protection Gown Gloves
	Passenger	Mask	
	Passenger – symptomatic, suspected or confirmed COVID-19	Procedure Mask	

After the Trip:

- PPE needs to be removed and disposed of after transporting a client and escort.
- Clean** and **disinfect** the entire vehicle after transporting each client according to section 4.
- The **driver should continuously monitor** themselves for any symptoms of COVID-19.
 - o Go about their day but practice physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and following all required public health restrictions, including continuous masking policies while in health facilities.
- Do not work if you are symptomatic, inform your MT Coordinator/Supervisor.**

4. Cleaning and Disinfection after transport of each client:

Clean and **disinfect** all surfaces in the vehicle following each client.

Cleaning refers to the removal of visible dirt, grime and impurities. Cleaning does not kill germs but helps remove them from the surface. **Clean** all frequently touched surfaces to remove visible dirt; use regular household soap or detergent and water.

Disinfecting refers to using a chemical to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection. **Disinfect** all frequently touched surfaces to kill germs and viruses on surfaces; most effective after surfaces are cleaned

- o Commercial **disinfectant** that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a virucidal claim (removes 99.9 % of viruses, bacteria). Follow the instructions on the label; or
- o Bleach water solution: **mix 20 mL (4 teaspoons) unscented bleach and 1000 mL (4 cups) water** in a labelled spray bottle. Prepare a new solution daily. Increase this concentration to 1 part bleach to 9 parts water (ex. 100 mL bleach and 900 mL water), if blood or body fluids are present.
- o **Alternatively**, a combined cleaner/disinfectant product could be used.

Wash hands and put on **personal protective equipment**. Always wear closed shoes/boots and disposable gloves. When gloves are removed, they are to be disposed in a no-touch waste receptacle and hands washed.

For suspected or confirmed COVID-19 clients or those with respiratory/COVID-19 symptoms or clients and escorts who have had close contact with someone that suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, the following should be worn when cleaning and disinfecting:

- Disposable gloves
- Disposable gown
- Eye protection
- Procedure mask

Consult the Community Health Nurse to access training on how and when to perform hand hygiene and put on and take off required PPE.

Steps for Cleaning and Disinfecting:

1. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
2. Avoid direct contact with body fluids. If body fluids are present (nose/mouth excretions, blood, vomit, diarrhea, etc.) use paper towels to absorb prior to cleaning.
3. If applicable, dispose of disposable seat covers.
4. Clean visibly soiled surfaces with detergent/cleaner. Use only disposable cloths (paper towels or wipes).
5. Clean all **frequently touched surfaces** as per the **Cleaning Checklist**.
6. Place used paper towels in non-touch garbage bin.
7. Apply disinfectant to the surface as per manufacturers' instructions. Surface should be moist. Allow to air dry.
8. Remove gloves, and any other personal protective equipment as per recommended protocol, and dispose of them in non-touch garbage bin.
9. Dispose of waste daily.
10. Perform hand hygiene after removal of PPE. Washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or higher).

Frequently touched surfaces:

- Plexiglass barrier
- Seats/seat back
- Door handles
- Overhead grab handles
- Windows and buttons
- Lock buttons
- Seat belts/buckles
- Center console
- Arm rests
- All touch surfaces in the passenger area

References:

Ontario Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections in All Health Care Settings, 3rd Edition

PHAC. Public health management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) PHAC. How to care for a person with COVID-19 at home – Advice for caregivers

PHAC. Annex: Environmental Sanitation Practices for Airlines to Control the Spread of Novel Coronavirus

WHO. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) technical guidance: Points of entry and mass gatherings

