

# Recommendations and Guidelines on COVID-19 from the Elders of New West Community Church

## COVID-19

The [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) states that,

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found mostly in animals. In humans, they can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The disease caused by the new coronavirus has been named COVID-19.

As of April 3<sup>rd</sup>, there are over a [million confirmed cases](#) worldwide, with a mortality rate of 5% of these particular cases. It is highly likely that this is a significant underestimation of actual cases given that recent research has shown that many people can be entirely [without symptoms](#) (asymptomatic) and even pass it on to others in this state. This may mean that the actual mortality rate (likelihood of dying from it) is significantly lower worldwide. However, both in the current pandemic, and in past flu outbreaks, mortality rates seem to be significantly affected by whether or not hospitals have enough staff and equipment. This has led most of the world to pursue a “flatten the curve” response, which is aimed at reducing deaths by lengthening the time in which the population is infected. While this approach *may* lead to an overall reduction of infections, it is expected that it will save thousands of lives simply by keeping medical facilities from being overwhelmed at particular points in time.

We are in the early stages of understanding this new (novel) coronavirus, but recent research has suggested that the virus can [survive on surfaces](#) for many days. Furthermore, there is increasing discussion and research on whether or not the virus may be [airborne](#), although there is no consensus. Researchers also don't know at this point whether there are any long-term effects or why the mortality rate is uniformly so much [higher for men](#) than for women.

While mortality rates have been far greater for those who are older and have other underlying health conditions, it is worth noting that the disease can cause serious and painful symptoms even among those who are [young and healthy](#). As such, even those who are less at-risk must also take significant precautions.

## Stay Home

Currently, British Columbians are being asked to [stay home](#) by our government. If you do not need to go out for work, groceries, or essential goods, we encourage you to abide by this directive, and especially to limit being in places where there are other people. Examples given by our health ministry include:

- Go to the grocery store only once a week
- Send one household member on errands to reduce the number of potential exposures
- Exercise at home or stay at least 2 metres from other people if you go for a walk in your neighbourhood

- Avoid public places like malls
- Do not have visitors

While personal, bodily interaction is so important to our lives, based on these directives we urge you not to make personal visits at this time, unless you are helping those in need with groceries or other essential needs.

### **Effective Habits**

It is most important to develop and maintain healthy and hygienic practices. Wash your hands regularly with soap for twenty seconds, especially before and after you go out. In public, keep a significant distance away from others, at least 2 meters. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, or mouth. If you sneeze or cough, do it tightly into your elbow, and not your hand.

### **Homemade Masks**

Western countries are beginning to change their recommendations on public mask usage, with the [CDC](#) and [Germany's public health institute](#) now recommending the making and usage of cloth masks due to shortages of "N95 respirators or surgical face masks, which are needed by front line health-care workers and are in extremely short supply." This change is largely due to new discoveries that the disease can be transmitted by those who show no symptoms whatsoever.

Studies show the efficacy of even homemade masks, with [one study](#) concluding, "Any type of general mask use is likely to decrease viral exposure and infection risk on a population level, in spite of imperfect fit and imperfect adherence, personal respirators providing most protection." We recommend using a homemade mask when you go out in public, and instructions may be found here: <https://masks4all.co/how-to-make-a-homemade-mask/>. Even a scarf around the face may provide some protection. It is important not to touch your face when you are wearing a mask. If you would like to wear a mask in public, but do not have the ability to make one, please contact the office.

### **Encouragement**

Information is important, however there is always the risk that focusing on the virus and steps to prevent infection can cause anxiety or fear. As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we know that we have nothing to fear. The worst thing that can happen is that we die and go to be with our Lord, which is "better by far" (Php 1:23). This doesn't mean we don't take precautions. It means that when we have taken due precautions, we leave the rest to the hands and plans of our gracious Father in heaven. Furthermore, as Pastor Paul preached recently, we have been given many reasons to believe that God may indeed desire to keep His people from the coronavirus, and we have the promise "no plague shall come near your tent" to pray and believe (Ps 91:10). Rather than anxiety, may you experience a peace that passes all understanding, as you present your petitions with thanksgiving to God (Php 4:6-7). And pray for one another at this time, for the prayers of the righteous have great power as they are working (Jas 5:16).