

PRACTICE STANDARD

Nurses: Preventing Transmission of Communicable Diseases

Introduction

This practice standard sets the expectations for all **nurses** to safeguard the health of their clients by minimizing the risk of **blood-borne virus** and other **communicable disease** transmission, with a focus on preventing transmission from nurse to client.

Standards

1. Nurses adhere to current legislation and follow organizational, provincial, and national authorities' guidance regarding:
 - a. Preventing communicable disease transmission.
 - b. Mitigating the risks of communicable disease transmission.
 - c. Communicable disease exposure management.
 - d. Reporting obligations, should a reportable communicable disease exposure occur.
2. Nurses follow **routine practices and additional precautions** for infection prevention and control for all clients.
3. Nurses take action to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases from themselves to their clients.
4. Nurses maintain their own wellness by:
 - a. Being appropriately immunized.
 - b. Following up-to-date guidance on communicable disease testing frequencies according to level of risk (e.g. testing for blood-borne viruses whenever an exposure occurs).
5. Nurses who test positive for a blood-borne virus must:
 - a. Know their serological and infectious status.
 - b. Seek advice on how to reduce the risk of transmission in their nursing practice.
 - c. Take appropriate measures to prevent transmission to clients in alignment with organizational/employer, provincial, and national authorities' guidance.
 - d. Only perform or assist to perform **exposure-prone procedures** when their health status (e.g. viral load) makes it safe.

Glossary

Blood-borne virus: A virus carried in the blood that can be spread from one person to another, such as hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and/or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The pathogen can be transmitted through contact with blood or, in some situations, other body fluids.

Communicable disease: means an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic products.¹

Exposure-prone procedures: Invasive procedures that have a higher-than-average risk of injury to the nurse that may expose the client to the nurse's blood or vice versa. EPPs include when a nurse's fingers and a needle or other sharp instrument are in a difficult-to-visualize or highly confined anatomic site.

Nurse: refers to all BCCNM nursing licensees, including licensed practical nurses, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, licensed graduate nurses, employed student nurses, and employed student psychiatric nurses.

Routine practices and additional precautions: Routine practices are a comprehensive set of infection prevention and control measures that aim to minimize or prevent health-care associated infections in all individuals in all health-care settings. Additional precautions are applied when the natural transmission characteristics of specific microorganisms or syndromes are not fully managed by routine practices.²

Revision history

Version #	Approved by board	Bylaw in-force	Description
1.0	March 1, 2026	April 1, 2026	Initial publication

Effective April 1, 2026, this practice standard, and any amendments to it, is made a bylaw under the authority of the *Health Professions and Occupations Act, B.C.*

Pub no.: 1027

¹ Public Health Act. (2008). Retrieved from https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/08028_01

² Public Health Agency of Canada. (2016). Routine practices and precautions for preventing the transmission of microorganisms in health care settings (edition date November 2016). Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/documents/services/publications/diseases-conditions/routine-practices-precautions-healthcare-associated-infections/routine-practices-precautions-healthcare-associated-infections-2016-FINAL-eng.pdf>