In-Person Behavioural Research  
Safe Research Guidelines

Researchers seeking to conduct in-person research must develop a [Safe Research Plan](/sites/ore.ubc.ca/files/documents/Safe%20Research%20Plan.docx) and attach it to their BREB ethics application. Safety considerations will differ from project to project; factors such as rates of infection and hospitalization, and availability of health services including vaccinations and rapid antigen testing will be taken into consideration. UBC researchers should be vaccinated for in person research. Researchers who are not vaccinated must provide detailed situation-specific strategies in their Safe Research Plan that mitigate the risk to participants. Researchers should be prepared to disclose their vaccination status to participants if asked. The Safe Research Plan is intended to provide reviewers with more details specific to the conduct of your research and its potential impact on participants.

**Researcher responsibility while conducting in person research**

The researcher has an obligation to mitigate the risk of infecting research participants. This is particularly important if the research provides no direct benefit to the participants. To mitigate COVID-19 risk to participants:

1. Researchers must complete a personal health assessment each day that they conduct in-person research, and stay home if they feel ill.
2. Researchers who can safely be vaccinated are encouraged to be fully vaccinated before commencing research.
3. Researchers should take precautions to mitigate the risk they might pose to their participants, including the use of masks and regular rapid antigen testing.
4. Researchers should ensure that they have the resources to abide by community safety requirements.
5. In regions where the impact of COVID-19 infections remains substantial, researchers are advised to avoid engaging with participants for extended periods of time and in poorly ventilated or crowded spaces, and to avoid close-range conversations.

**Safety Guidance**

Be aware that community guidelines, restrictions and practices may vary and will need to be factored into your Safe Research Plan.

1. Relevant guidance:
   * British Columbia Public Health Office: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/response>
   * The [BC Center for Disease Control](http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/)
   * [WorkSafeBC](https://www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates)
   * The Government of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/measures-reduce-community.html#a3>
   * For guidance on reducing COVID-19 risk in community settings: <https://health.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/reducing-covid-19-risk-community-settings-tool-operators.html>
   * Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Indigenous communities: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298#chap1>
   * Information on travelling in Canada or abroad
     + <https://travel.gc.ca/>
     + <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/>
     + <https://www.internationalsos.com/>
     + If students are traveling as part of this research have they registered with UBC’s Safety Abroad Program <https://safetyabroad.ubc.ca>
2. Review First Nation/Inuit/Métis community websites for the regions where you will be requesting permission to conduct research.
3. Review other guidance specific to your profession or research field that could help with developing risk mitigation strategies.
4. Ensure that you are aware of all relevant public health or other governmental or institutional policies, guidance and regulations pertaining to the location where your research is being conducted.

**Vaccination Status**

Vaccination provides an important layer of protection for researchers and participants. UBC researchers should be vaccinated for in person research. Researchers who are not vaccinated must provide detailed situation-specific strategies in their Safe Research Plan that mitigate the risk to participants. Researchers should be prepared to disclose their vaccination status to participants if asked. There is no requirement that participants be vaccinated. However, if researchers prefer to restrict participation to vaccinated individuals, this should be stated in the inclusion criteria and in recruitment materials.

**Masks and Rapid Antigen Testing**

In light of recent increases in COVID-19 cases, the Omicron variant, and potential future variants, the Behavioural REBs continue to recommend (and may require) the use of masks during in-person research activity.

**Type of mask**: N95 or KN 95, as they protect against aerosol transmission. Alternatives must be well-fitting and have 3 layers of protection. However, the BREB may require, depending on the research setting, the use of N95 or KN 95 masks. Cloth masks are not considered sufficient for use during research activities. The BREB may also require that researchers supply masks to participants.

**When to use**: focus groups, when physical distancing is not possible, and in areas with poor ventilation. If the researcher is one-on-one with a participant and the participant does not want to use a mask, the researcher may also remove their mask, if there is sufficient ventilation and distancing.

**Rapid Antigen Testing** may be advised by the BREB when researchers are travelling between multiple research locations, especially in high risk areas.

**Research Involving Indigenous Communities**

If you have not yet done so, please contact the Indigenous Research Support Initiative (IRSI) for more guidance on how COVID-19 impacts, modifies, or pauses research with(in) Indigenous communities (<https://irsi.ubc.ca/>).

*Community Guidelines*

Researchers will need confirmation from the community that it has the capacity to accept research activity (notwithstanding any agreements drafted pre-COVID). In addition to completing a current Safe Research Plan or safety protocol, please also provide confirmation of community agreement.

Before attempting to engage or re-engage, verify whether the Indigenous community has issued any guidance regarding their key contacts, capacity, and operations during COVID-19. These may be found on individual community websites, including on social media sites such as Facebook.

**COVID Health Check**

The health check is needed for both participants and researchers prior to in-person contact. Please use this link to find the most current self-assessment tool: <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en>.

**Communicating & Reporting the Safe Research Plan**

Before you start your engagement with participants, please note:

1. You will be required to provide the [Notice of COVID-Related Risks during Research](/sites/ore.ubc.ca/files/documents/Notice%20of%20COVID-related%20risks.pdf) to invitees/participants before they are asked to consent. Information contained in the Notice regarding risks of COVID do not need to be repeated in the consent forms or scripts.
2. Determine how you will distribute the Safe Research Plan to the research team.
3. Be aware that any changes or unanticipated problems will need to be reported to the Research Ethics Board before proceeding.