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Daily life

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Healthcare

For information on the Government of B.C.'s health plan, see the [Medical Services Plan \(MSP\)](#) section.

HealthLink BC

HealthLink BC provides free non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. Information and advice is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by telephone, website, a mobile app, and printable information. All of HealthLink BC's services are free.

HealthLink BC does not provide emergency services. **If you have an urgent medical situation, call 9-1-1.**

Call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1. If you cannot hear, or do not hear very well, call 7-1-1.

- Speak with a nurse, or get help finding services in your community. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



- Speak with a dietician about food, healthy eating, and nutrition. Available Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Speak with someone about physical activity and exercise. Available Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Speak with a pharmacist about medicines. Available every evening and overnight, from 5 p.m. to 9 a.m.

HealthLink BC has [translation services](#) in more than 130 languages. When you call 8-1-1, say the name of your language (for example, “Punjabi”).

- Visit the website for information on more than 5,000 health, nutrition, medication, physical activity, and medication topics.
- If you feel sick, you can check your symptoms (signs of illness) online to learn what you should do.
- Information is in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Korean, Punjabi, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
- Healthlink BC also has an [app for your smartphone](#). Use it to find walk-in clinics, hospitals, emergency rooms, immunization locations, pharmacies, laboratory services, and Urgent and Primary Care Centres near you.

Finding a family doctor or a nurse practitioner

It may be hard to find a family doctor or a nurse practitioner who can take you as a patient. Keep looking and talking with people. New care providers can come to your community anytime.

- Divisions of Family Practice may know of a waiting list you can join to find a doctor in your community. Visit the website to [find the Division of Family Practice](#) in your community.
- The British Columbia College of Nursing Professionals has a directory of nurse practitioners. Search the directory for [nurse practitioners in your community](#).
- Talk to people at your immigrant settlement agency. They may be able to help you register to find a care provider. Find a settlement agency near you:
 - [Permanent residents, including refugees](#)
cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/services/index.asp
 - [Temporary residents](#), including refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, and post-secondary international students
- Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 for support finding a family doctor (or nurse practitioner) and health services in your community.



- Talk with your friends, neighbours, people you work with, or other people in your community. Ask if their care provider is accepting new patients.

Making an appointment

Before you go to your care provider, phone the office for an appointment. Always take your BC Services Card with you when you go to a doctor. Try to arrive a few minutes early for your appointment. If you are late, you may miss your appointment. If you miss your appointment, you may have to pay a fee. This fee is not covered by MSP.

Walk-in clinics, Urgent and Primary Care Centres, and virtual care

If you do not have a care provider yet, or you can't get an appointment with your care provider, you may be able to go to a walk-in clinic or an Urgent and Primary Care Centre (UPCC). Doctors and nurse practitioners at walk-in clinics and UPCCs are for people who have a medical problem, but not an emergency.

Call Healthlink BC at 8-1-1 to [find a walk-in clinic or UPCC near you](#). Some clinics are open until late. Many are open 7 days a week. You do not need an appointment, but you should check to see if the clinic is open.

If you are waiting for your BC Services Card, you can still go to a walk-in clinic. Bring 2 pieces of identification (ID). At least 1 piece of ID must have your photo. You will have to pay for the visit. Keep your receipt. When you get your BC Services Card, you may be able to ask for a refund.

Hospitals and emergency departments

If you have a serious accident, are seriously injured, or suddenly get very sick, you can go to the hospital emergency department. Many emergency departments are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you use prescription medicine, bring it with you. The doctor needs to know what medicine you take. People who do not speak English should try to bring someone to help translate. If you have MSP coverage, you do not have to pay for hospital costs. For more information on how to call 9-1-1, see [the Emergencies section](#) on the



First Few Days page.

Language assistance

The Provincial Language Service has interpretation services for healthcare needs. You cannot book this service yourself. Ask your doctor, nurse, or midwife (someone who helps deliver babies) to call the Provincial Language Service to book an interpreter for you. HealthLink BC 8-1-1 offers health information and advice in more than 130 languages.

Getting pharmacy services

Pharmacists are health care professionals. They work in pharmacies and hospitals. Doctors and nurses write prescriptions for medications. Pharmacists dispense (provide) the medicine and help people understand how to use it (how much to take and when to take it).

If a doctor, nurse practitioner, dentist, or midwife writes you a prescription, take it to a pharmacy.

Pharmacists in B.C. can also:

- Assess and prescribe for many common health problems. These include urinary tract infections (UTIs), pink eye (conjunctivitis), allergies, fungal infections, skin rashes, and cold sores
- Prescribe contraception (birth control), which is free in B.C.
- Change prescriptions. For example, from pills to a liquid, or to a medication that is less expensive
- Renew some prescriptions if you run out, or provide an emergency supply
- Give vaccinations and some drugs by injection

You can go into a pharmacy and ask to speak with a pharmacist about any of these things. You do not need an appointment.

In B.C., pharmacies are private businesses. They charge different amounts for drugs and for dispensing them. Compare prices and services before you fill a prescription.



For more information about [how pharmacists can help you](#), visit HealthLinkBC.

Buying medicine

You can buy some medicines without a prescription. These are called non-prescription or over-the-counter medicines. They are usually for less serious problems, such as a headache, a cold, or allergies. If you have a question about over-the-counter medicine, ask the pharmacist. You can also call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a pharmacist.

Paying for prescription drugs

There are some medicines you can buy only if you have a prescription. Prescriptions must be written by a doctor, nurse practitioner, dentist, or midwife. You can buy prescription medicines at a pharmacy (drug store). Some grocery stores have pharmacies. When you go to a pharmacy, take your prescription with you. The prescription tells the pharmacist what medicine you need and how much to take (the dose).

The pharmacist will tell you when to take the medicine and how long to continue for (for example, 2 times a day for 1 week). Search online for a pharmacy. You can also call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1.

PharmaCare and Fair PharmaCare

PharmaCare is a public program. Its 12 plans help B.C. residents pay for prescription drugs, pharmacy services, and medical supplies and devices.

The Fair PharmaCare plan is based on family income. People with lower incomes get more help paying for prescriptions. You must file your income tax every year to receive Fair PharmaCare coverage.

If you don't register, you have a deductible of \$10,000. This means you need to spend \$10,000 on eligible prescription costs before Fair PharmaCare helps you pay.



You must be enrolled in MSP or enrolling at the same time you register for Fair PharmaCare. For details, go to gov.bc.ca/ahdc or call 604-683-7151 (Lower Mainland) or 1-800-663-7100.

PharmaCare's other plans provide 100% coverage to people receiving income assistance (Plan C), who have financial and medical need for psychiatric medication or opioid treatment (Plan G), and others.

For more information, go to www.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare.

All amounts are in Canadian dollars.

Dentists

Dentists and dental hygienists take care of your teeth. To find a dentist, ask friends or settlement workers. You can also visit the [BC Dental Association website](#).

MSP will not pay for dental services in a dentist's office. If you need dental surgery, you will be sent to a hospital and MSP will cover the cost. Some employers have dental benefits for employees. If you have employer dental coverage, it may pay part of our cost for treatment in a dentist's office. Ask your employer about dental coverage.

Some public health units have dental clinics. They give free dental checkups and cleanings to young children. They may also have low cost dental care for older children and adults. If you have children, you may be eligible for the Healthy Kids Program.

Eye exams and eyeglasses

Eye doctors are called optometrists. They can work in their own office, or in a store that sells glasses. MSP covers part of the cost of full eye exams. Some optometrists may charge more than that amount. Ask your optometrist how much the eye exam will cost. If it costs more than MSP will cover, you will need to pay the rest.



MSP pays for 1 routine eye exam by an optometrist every 2 years for:

- children and youth 18 years and younger
- adults 65 years and older

MSP will also pay for eye exams if you have a medical need – for example, if an object gets in your eye, or if you have an eye disease. Some employers have benefit plans for employees. These plans might help pay for eye exams, glasses, and contact lenses. Ask at your work if there is a benefit plan. If you have children, you may be eligible for the Healthy Kids Program.

Healthy Kids Program

B.C.'s Healthy Kids Program helps low-income families pay for basic dental care, prescription eyeglasses, and hearing instruments or alternative hearing assistance. If your children are under 19, you should check the [Healthy Kids Program](#). To use the program, your family must be eligible for MSP Supplementary Benefits.

Public health units

Public health units:

- help parents prepare for a new baby
- support families after a baby is born, including visits at home
- provide vaccinations (also called immunizations). A vaccine is medicine that prevents disease. Babies, children, and adults should get vaccinated (immunized) against dangerous diseases, such as measles and whooping cough (pertussis). Learn more about [immunization in B.C.](#)

Public health units also provide information and support for:

- early childhood development
- speech therapy
- hearing clinics
- vision (eye) tests
- nutrition and healthy eating
- dental care
- youth clinics
- sexual health information
- help for alcohol and drug users



To find a public health unit in your area, contact [HealthLink BC](#). If you visit a public health unit, bring your BC Services Card with you.

Private specialized clinics

Private clinics provide health services such as physiotherapy, traditional Chinese medicine, massage therapy, and naturopathic care. If you go to a private clinic, ask if their services are covered by MSP. If they are not, you must pay with your own money.

Mental health, alcohol, and other drugs

Health is not just about having a strong body. Thoughts and emotions are important, too. Sometimes, people become sad or angry for no clear reason. They may use substances like alcohol and other drugs, including some medications, to cope with unpleasant thoughts or feelings. They may feel depressed, afraid, or anxious. Without help, these mental health problems can become dangerous.

If you are having trouble with your emotions, you can talk to your doctor. If you do not have a family doctor, talk to someone at your local immigrant settlement agency. A settlement worker can help you find someone to talk to. Do not feel ashamed. Many Canadians get help with their mental health. You do not have to deal with the problem by yourself.

Most B.C. communities have mental health centres. They can help people with mental health and substance use problems – for example, depression, anxiety, and using alcohol and other drugs (substance use).

- Visit the B.C. government's [Mental Health and Substance Use website](#). You can find resources, services, and supports that meet your needs.
- Call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1.
- Contact [Crisis Line Support](#). You can speak directly to someone for support. Crisis lines can also give you a referral to a mental health service. Toll-free: 310-6789 (no area code).



Getting healthy and staying healthy

Being strong and healthy is an important part of taking care of our physical and mental health. [The B.C. government](#) has resources to

help. [Patients as Partners](#) has tools, education, events, activities, and other resources.

- Vaping and e-cigarettes: [HealthLinkBC](#)
- Quitting smoking: [QuitNow](#) and the [BC Smoking Cessation Program](#)
- Physical activity: [HealthLinkBC](#)
- A healthy heart: [HealthLink BC](#) and [The Heart and Stroke Foundation](#)

Protect yourself against the flu

Influenza is a virus. It is also called the flu. It can cause serious illness and even death. Many people have to go to the hospital because of the flu. There are vaccines available for the flu. Every fall, before flu season begins, public health offices across British Columbia advertise clinics where you can get a vaccination to prevent the flu. You can also check with your family doctor or local pharmacist.

You can reduce the risk of catching the flu or spreading it to others by washing your hands regularly, keeping your hands away from your face, cleaning and disinfecting common surfaces that a lot of people touch, staying home if you are sick, eating healthy, being physically active, and getting the flu vaccine.

- For [information about influenza vaccines](#) and where to get one, visit the ImmunizeBC website.
- Visit HealthlinkBC for more [information about influenza](#).

COVID-19

COVID-19 is a very serious virus that has killed more than a million people around the world. The symptoms are similar to flu, including cough, fever, and difficulty breathing. Some people also have stomach problems. COVID-19 spreads very quickly. Older people and anyone with serious health issues are at high risk of becoming very ill or dying from COVID-19.

Find information about COVID-19, how to protect yourself, your family and your community, and what to do if you suspect you have the virus.

- For [information about COVID-19](#), visit the BC Centre for Disease Control.



- B.C. also has provincial information on [COVID-19 resources and support](#).

Where to go for help

[HealthLink BC](#) provides access to free non-emergency health information and advice in B.C. Information and advice is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by telephone, website, a mobile app, and printable information. All of HealthLink BC's services are free.

[Patients as Partners](#) provides tools, education, and other resources. You can find information about personal and family-centered care, managing chronic (long-term) disease, patient and public engagement, and a calendar of events.

[HeretoHelp](#) has information about mental illness and substance use problems. They can help you manage mental illness and maintain good mental health. They offer tests so you can understand your mental health better.

[Suicide Hotline](#): If you feel very upset or angry, or if you have thoughts of hurting yourself, please call the suicide hotline. The suicide hotline is free. It is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The suicide hotline is a safe place to talk. Everything you say is completely confidential (secret).

Toll-free: 1 800 784-2433 (1 800 SUICIDE)

[Bounce Back](#) is a skill building program that helps adults with depression, stress, and anxiety.

Toll-free: 1 866 639-0522

Find more [mental health and substance use supports](#) on the B.C. government website.

Supports for children and youth

Child and Teen Mental Health in B.C.

This B.C. government website offers resources and information on [mental health services for your child or teenager](#).



Foundry

[Foundry](#) helps young people aged 12 to 24 to be healthier. They offer health and wellness resources, services, and supports.

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

The [Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre](#) has information and resources for children, youth, and families. You can learn about mental health, eating disorders, addictions, anger management, anxiety, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, psychosis, schizophrenia, suicide prevention, and stress management.

Kids Help Phone

The [Kids Help Phone](#) is for children experiencing abuse or mental health problems. Children and youth can call this phone number anytime to get help and information. The service can also refer callers to places that can help them, such as clinics and community centres.

ERASE Bullying Prevention Strategy

The [ERASE Bullying Prevention Strategy](#) educates students about bullying. It helps students report bullies. ERASE also includes resources on mental health, substance use, school safety, and sexual orientation / gender identity (SOGI).

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Emergencies

In most places in B.C., the emergency phone number for fire, police, and ambulance is 9-1-1. The 9-1-1 call is free. When you call 9-1-1, an operator will answer the phone. The operator will ask if you need police, fire, or ambulance. In most communities, you can ask for help in your own language if you do not speak English. Learn the English word for the language you speak (for example, learn to say “Cantonese”) so you can find an interpreter. Also learn the words “police”, “fire” and “ambulance” in English. If you can speak a little English, it will be easier for the 9-1-1 operator to help you.

In some very small communities, the emergency phone number is not 9-1-1. Ask for the emergency telephone number as soon as you



arrive. Your settlement agency, town hall, or police department can tell you the number. You can also find it online. Search for “emergency number” and your community name.

Calling an ambulance

If you have a medical emergency and cannot get to the hospital yourself, you can call an ambulance. In most places, the phone number is 9-1-1. There might be a different phone number in small communities. Check for the number inside the front pages of your telephone book or ask your local police department. You should write down and save emergency numbers. When you call the emergency number, the operator will ask if you want police, fire, or ambulance. Ask for an ambulance.

The operator will ask questions about your problem. They may give you medical instructions over the phone. If an ambulance is sent, paramedics will take care of you. They may take you to the emergency department of a hospital. MSP does not cover the full cost of going to hospital by ambulance. You will have to pay some of the cost. You do not have to pay right away. You will get a bill later. If you have a low income, you may get assistance.

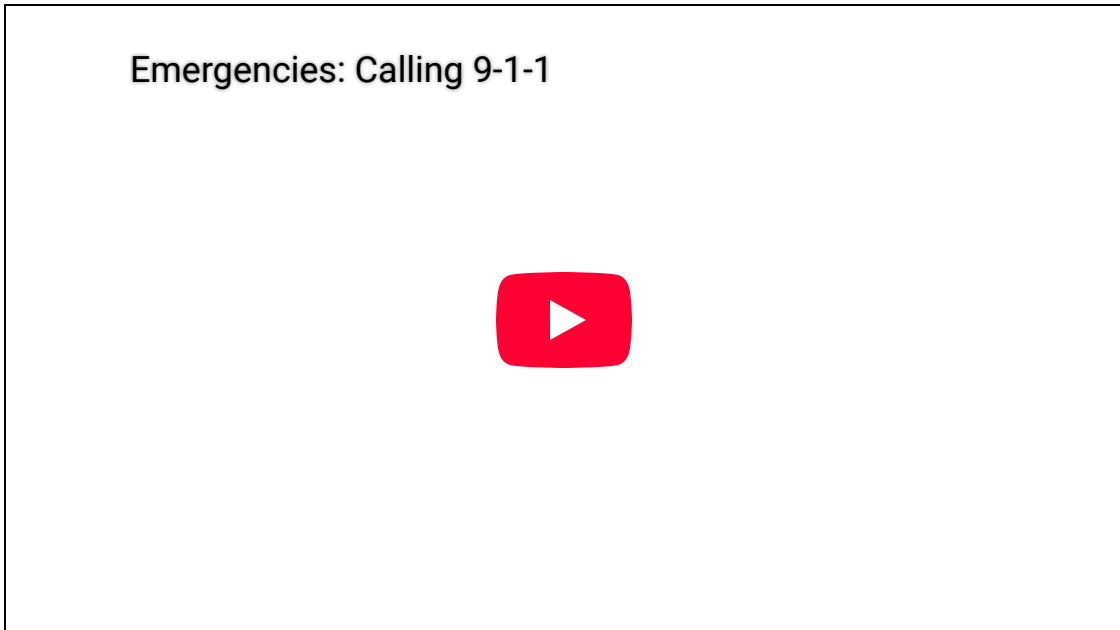
9-1-1 Tips

- Know your location (where you are calling from). Tell 9-1-1 the city, the address, nearby streets, or other landmarks such as a gas station, a school, or a store)
- If you call 9-1-1 by mistake, **do not hang up**. Stay on the phone and tell the operator that it was a mistake. If you hang up, they may think you are in danger and send the police. You will not get in trouble for dialing 9-1-1 by mistake
- Teach your children how to call 9-1-1 and ask for help. Teach them to say your address and the kind of help they need (fire, police, or ambulance)
- Do not program your phone to dial 9-1-1 automatically
- Do not text or tweet 9-1-1. In an emergency, dial the phone number
- Visit <https://www.ecomm911.ca> for information in several languages.



How to Dial 9-1-1

Watch the video below for an example of how to call 9-1-1.



This video was made in collaboration with The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC (AMSSA), BC Ambulance Service, BC Poison Control Centre, E-comm 911, ELSA Net, HealthLink BC and Vancouver Coastal Health. This project is made possible through funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

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Education

British Columbia's schools are among the best in the world. The cost of studying here is lower than in many other locations. We offer exceptional elementary and secondary schools. Our universities and post-secondary institutions are known world-wide. We offer support for international students and for those wishing to learn English as a second language.

For more information on [B.C.'s international education](#) options, see the Study in B.C. section.



Early years to Grade 12

The government of British Columbia sets laws and regulations to make sure every child in B.C. gets a good education. All children between the ages of 5 and 16 must be receiving an education. Most parents send their children to public schools. Some parents choose to pay for independent (private) schools. Some children learn at home through homeschooling or distributed (distance) learning.

Study Permits for Minor Children Studying in B.C.

Children under the age of 19 who come to Canada to study **without** a parent or guardian must apply for a study permit. They don't need a study permit if they are with parents who are working or studying within Canada. [Apply for a study permit from IRCC.](#)

Public schools

Education in public schools is free. Boards of education (school boards) manage public schools in their communities. School boards plan and deliver programs and services for local students. They must follow the laws and regulations set by the B.C. Ministry of Education.

Registering your child in a public school

Children usually attend the public school closest to their home. To register your child in a public school, contact your school board. Find your school board. When you register your child, you will be asked to provide official documents showing your child's date of birth, your resident status in British Columbia, and your address.

You will also be asked to show your child's immunization record. The province has mandatory vaccine registration to protect children against diseases. Some school communities have a program called Settlement Workers in Schools. Settlement workers help newcomers adjust to their new school and community. [Find public schools near you.](#)

Independent (private) schools

B.C. also has independent schools. Most independent schools charge fees. Some independent schools are based on religion or culture. Some schools teach classes in special ways, and others may be for students with special needs. For [more information](#), contact



the Federation of Independent School Associations. For more [information about independent schools](#), visit the B.C. Ministry of Education website.

Early years programs for children under 5 years of age

StrongStart BC programs are for young children. They help children develop language, physical, cognitive (thinking), social, and emotional skills. They also help children get ready to start school. Children can learn through play, stories, music, and art. They can make friends and play with other children.

Parents or caregivers take part in the program with their children. The program is for children from birth up to 5 years old. StrongStart BC early learning programs are free. [Learn more about StrongStart BC](#) and find a program near you.

Many schools have [Ready, Set, Learn programs](#) for children aged 3 to 5 years. Children learn new skills by playing. Parents can get information to help their child learn.

Kindergarten to Grade 12

Kindergarten to Grade 7: Elementary school

Children usually start elementary school in the year they turn 5 years old. They usually finish elementary school when they are 11 or 12. The [first year of elementary school](#) is called Kindergarten.

Most elementary schools teach from Kindergarten to Grade 7. School days start between 8:30 and 9 a.m., and end around 3 p.m.

Grades 7-12: Middle and secondary school

After elementary school, students go to middle school and secondary (high) school. Middle school is from Grades 6 to 9. Students in middle school are around 10 to 15 years old. Secondary school is from Grade 8 until Grade 12. Students in secondary school are 13 to 18 years old.



Not every school district has middle schools. Districts without a middle school only have elementary school (kindergarten to Grade

7) and secondary school (Grade 8 to 12). After students finish secondary school, they get a graduation certificate (diploma). After secondary school, students can get more education (post-secondary). This includes college, university, and specialized job training (vocational training).

Children with disabilities and special needs

Some children may have a physical or mental condition that makes it difficult to attend regular classes. These children have special needs. British Columbia has programs for children who need more support. Contact your child's school for more information.

English Language Learning (ELL) for children

Schools will provide English Language Learning (ELL) for all students who need help learning English. Most students get help learning English during regular classes. Some older students take regular classes and ELL classes together. Special programs can help young children learn English.

Ask a settlement worker if there is an English Language Learning preschool program in your area. [Find a settlement agency near you.](#)

French programs

There are 3 kinds of French programs in B.C. public schools:

- **Francophone programs** are for students who speak French as their first language. Contact the Conseil scolaire francophone de la Colombie-Britannique (School District 93) [for more information](#).
- **French Immersion** is for students whose first language is not French. That means French is the only language spoken in their classroom. Math, science, history, and all other subjects are taught in the French language.
- **French Classes** are available to students in English programs. Classes are taught in English, and French is one of their subjects. For [more information about French Immersion](#) or French classes, talk to your local school board.



Getting involved and volunteering

If you have a child in school, you are encouraged to be an active member of the school community. Talk with your child's teachers.

Ask questions about the class or how your child is doing. Go to the parent teacher meetings. These are special meetings held once or twice a year.

There are Parent Advisory Councils (PAC) at public schools. If your child is in the school, you are automatically a member of the school PAC. You can go to meetings, learn how the school works, get involved in school activities, and make suggestions to help.

You can also volunteer at your child's school by helping out in the classroom or on field trips (class trips and visits outside the school).

School information

The school will send you information about your child's studies and school activities. Watch for emails, letters, and notes from the teacher, the school board, the principal, or from "class representatives" (other parents who volunteer to share information for the class). These letters and emails may contain important information. You may need to get the information translated. Printed letters may be given to parents or to the children. Ask your children if they have any letters to give you.

Homeschooling and distributed (distance) learning

While an education is mandatory for children aged 5 to 16, some children in B.C. do not attend schools. They may live too far away from school. Some children are sick and cannot travel to school. Some parents may prefer to let children learn at home. There are 2 ways students can learn at home: homeschooling, and distributed learning.

- Homeschooling is when parents must act as the teachers and teach their children at home. Parents must prepare the lessons and make sure their children are learning. They must register their child with a school before they begin.
- Distributed (distance) learning is when teachers send lessons and homework for students to do at home. Lessons can be delivered online or by mail (correspondence). Teachers are certified by schools. They are responsible for preparing the lessons and helping the students learn.



Post-secondary education

British Columbia is home to internationally recognized universities and educational institutes.

After Grade 12, many students continue their education. This is called postsecondary education. There are 25 public universities, colleges, and institutes in B.C. Public institutions funded by the provincial government. Students pay tuition (school fees) to attend. There are also more than 300 private institutions in B.C. Private institutions are not funded by the provincial government. This is why tuition usually costs more at private institutions.

People can study many different subjects at college, university, or institutions. Popular programs include arts, education, sciences, technology, medicine, nursing, engineering, and law. It takes about 4 years of full-time study to complete a bachelor's degree. After earning a bachelor's degree, you can get a master's or a doctorate (graduate) degree. You can also get diplomas and certificates.

Some public colleges and institutes offer university transfer programs. You can take courses at a college or institute, then transfer to a university to finish your degree. The university will check the classes you took and may give you credit for them. Check with the university before you start studying to know if it will recognize your transfer courses. For more information, check [the B.C. Transfer Guide](#).

Colleges, technical institutes, and some universities also have trades and skills training programs. You can get job training for many careers. For example, you can get training to work as a carpenter, mechanic, horticulturist, early childhood educator, or computer technician. See a list of [post-secondary institutions in British Columbia](#).

Education Planner B.C. can help you choose post-secondary courses.
educationplannerbc.ca

Costs and financial help for postsecondary education

Post-secondary education can be expensive. Students taking post-secondary level courses must pay tuition and other fees. They must also buy books and materials. The B.C. government may provide



funding to students who need help to pay for their studies. You can apply for loans, grants, and bursaries. Grants and bursaries do not need to be repaid. Loans must be paid back when you finish school.

To qualify for [financial aid](#), students must live in B.C. and be permanent residents or Canadian citizens. Talk to the financial aid office at the school you plan to attend.

Post-secondary students who do not have permanent residence or Canadian citizenship [will pay higher tuition](#). They may also need to apply for a study permit.

See the Study in B.C. section for more information on how to [study in B.C. as a post-secondary student](#), and how to get a study permit.

As a post-secondary student or a graduate, you may require an assessment of your credentials. An Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) is an independent assessment of your foreign degree, diploma, certificate or other credential. Please visit the [IRCC website](#) for complete and up-to-date ECA requirements and designated agencies.

Distributed (distance) learning for adults

Many colleges and universities offer distributed learning programs. You can get a post-secondary education no matter where you live. For information, contact your local college or university or [Thompson Rivers University Open Learning](#).

Private post-secondary schools and colleges

B.C. has many [private post-secondary institutions](#). These include private universities, colleges, business schools, technical schools, and language schools. [Financial aid](#) is also available for students at some private institutions.

Continuing education for adults

Many Canadians sign up for classes long after they have stopped going to school. They may want to learn a new skill for work, a new language, or study something they are interested in. These programs are called Continuing Education. Find classes by searching



online for “continuing education” and the name of your community.

Adult Upgrading

Adults can go to school to upgrade their education or prepare for a new job. There are programs for specific subjects, like reading or math. There are also programs to finish high school and learn new job skills. Programs may be full time or part time. They are usually called Adult Basic Education or ABE. ESL courses at public post-secondary institutions are also part of adult upgrading.

Upgrade your qualifications

If your employer or a regulatory body decides that you need more training or experience to work in B.C., there are several programs and services that may be useful:

- **Post-secondary institutions.** Colleges and universities offer short-term courses and degree programs. Learn more about B.C. post-secondary institutions in the [Study in B.C. section](#).
- **Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants program.** Using an approach tailored to your situation, [Career Paths can help you upgrade your skills](#) and find the perfect employment fit.
- **Bridging Programs and Foreign Credential Recognition.** Regulatory authorities often work with schools to provide special programs that can help you work in B.C. If you work in a regulated occupation, check with [your regulatory authority](#).

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Learn English

English is the main language spoken in B.C. There are many English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to help adults learn to speak, read, and write English.

Your [local settlement agency](#) may be able to tell you what options exist for learning English.



The Canadian government offers [Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada \(LINC\)](#). Adult refugees and permanent residents can take these classes for free.

Several public [post-secondary institutions](#) also offer ESL courses. Permanent residents, refugees, and Canadian citizens do not pay tuition for these courses. Other costs may apply.

You can get help to learn or improve your English at literacy programs in your community. These programs are free. Some programs are for adults and some are for families.

- [Community Literacy](#)
- [Adult upgrading](#)
- [Decoda Literacy Solutions](#)

Private English schools and tutors

Many private English schools and tutors (teachers) provide English language training. Most of these schools and classes are not regulated by government. Visit the Private Training Institutions website to [find approved programs](#).

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Driving in B.C.

Driving in B.C. is a privilege and not a right. You must have a valid driver's licence. The vehicle you are driving must be licenced and insured. You must know and follow the rules of the road.

The B.C. government has [information on driving](#), including road safety and the law, driver licensing and insurance, seasonal driving, popular routes, provincial rest areas, emergency contacts, and resources for older drivers.

Driver's licence from another country

You can use your driver's licence for up to 90 days after you move here. You should apply for your B.C. driver's licence as soon as you arrive in B.C. You may have to wait for your new licence to arrive in the mail. If you are visiting, you can use your non-B.C. driver's licence for up to 6 months. After 6 months, you need a valid B.C. driver's licence to drive here.



There are different processes for getting a B.C. driver's licence. The process depends on where your original driver's licence is from.

Drivers from some countries may be able to get a driver's licence without any extra tests. Others may need to pass knowledge, eyesight, and road tests.

If your driver's licence is not in English, you will need to provide a translation by an approved translator.

When you get a B.C. driver's licence, you will need to give up your old licence.

Students do not need to get a B.C. driver's licence if:

- they have a valid driver's licence from another country
- they are registered as a full-time student in an institution listed on this webpage

Temporary foreign workers in the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program can use a valid driver's licence from another country for up to 12 months. After 12 months, you will need a B.C. driver's licence.

When you drive, always carry your driver's licence with you. A police officer may ask to see it.

Learn the driving rules and road signs in British Columbia. Some may be the same as where you learned to drive. Some may be different. You can take a practice knowledge test online.

Learn to Drive Smart has information about rules, signs, signals, and road markings in B.C.

You can also do the practice test on your smartphone. Download the Learn to Drive Smart app from the app store.

Applying for a new driver's licence

- To apply for a B.C. driver's licence, you must be 16 years of age or older.
- If you are under 19 years of age, you will need permission (consent) from your parent or legal guardian. They can come to the driver licensing office with you, or you can bring a signed consent form
- You can apply for a driver's licence by booking an appointment at an ICBC driver licensing office.



- You will need to take 2 pieces of identification. You need different types of licences to drive different types of vehicles in B.C. For example, cars, motorcycles, buses, large trucks, and taxis all have different licences.

Graduated Licensing Program

B.C. has a [Graduated Licensing Program](#). You must pass several levels to get full driving rights. If this is your first driver's licence, you must learn basic rules and driving knowledge first. After passing the knowledge test, you can graduate to the next level. This program will help you be a safer driver.

Learner stage

The first step in getting a B.C. driver's licence is getting a learner's licence. You must take a knowledge test to show that you know B.C.'s driving rules. You must also have your eyesight tested. The learner's licence is valid for 2 years. You must practise driving with your learner's licence for at least 12 months before you can take your road test. There are some things you are not allowed to do yet, like drive between midnight and 5 a.m. You can find a list of all the rules for the learner's licence online.

Novice stage

After you have been driving for 1 year with your learner's permit, you can take a road test to get your novice permit. You need to make an appointment to take the road test. You can book your own appointment online. After 2 years with a novice licence, you can take a second road test and get a full licence. There are fees for the knowledge and road tests. After you pass the road test, you will pay another fee for your driver's licence.

Driving schools

If you have never had a driver's licence, you may want to take driving lessons. ICBC has a list of approved training schools. You may be able to find a driving instructor (teacher) who speaks your language.

Driver Resources

There are good driving resources online.



- [DriveBC](#) and [Shift Into Winter](#) have up-to-date road conditions and driving tips
- [DriveBC's directions](#) will tell you how far away other cities and towns are, and how long it will take to drive there
- [HelloBC](#) has maps for cities and regions across British Columbia

Please refer to the Newcomer's Guide for [more information on Driving in B.C.](#), including insurance and safety information.

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Public transportation

There are buses running across the province to help transport people. Buses pick people up at bus stops. People get on the bus at the front door and get off at the back door. The bus may not stop at every bus stop. If you want to get off the bus, you need to ring the bell first to tell the bus driver to stop. Some buses have a pull cord on the wall above the seats. Some buses have red buttons on the poles.

TransLink (Vancouver area)

TransLink operates buses, SkyTrains, the SeaBus ferry, and the West Coast Express.

- There are buses across the region
- There are 3 SkyTrain lines
 - The Expo Line connects downtown with Burnaby, New Westminster, and Surrey.
 - The Millennium Line connects downtown with Burnaby and Coquitlam
 - The Canada Line connects downtown Vancouver to the Vancouver International Airport and Richmond
- The SeaBus is a ferry (boat) that takes passengers across Vancouver Harbour. It connects downtown Vancouver and the North Shore
- The West Coast Express is a rail line between downtown Vancouver and Mission. It runs from Monday to Friday

Buy a single fare to travel on different TransLink services for 90 minutes. You can transfer between buses, SkyTrains, or the SeaBus without paying again. The [cost of your ticket](#) depends on how many Fare Zones you travel through. Longer trips (more than 1 zone) cost



more during peak hours.

You can [buy Compass Cards](#) at machines in SkyTrain stations and in some stores. You can also order a card online or by phone. Greater Vancouver: 604 398-2042

All TransLink vehicles are accessible. This means people can ride the bus in a wheelchair or scooter.

Some travellers pay lower fees. This includes seniors (65 years and older), HandyCard holders, and people under 18 years old. Children under 5 years old travel for free. Children need to be with someone who has [paid a fare](#). A passenger can bring up to 4 children for free.

The [TransLink website](#) has useful information. It also has a trip planning tool to help you find the right bus for your trip.

BC Transit (All of B.C. except Vancouver area)

BC Transit provides bus service to communities outside the Vancouver area. You can download a local bus map and schedule on the BC Transit website. You can also get print copies at your local government office or transit centre. To find the local transit centre, click the Contact Us link on [the BC Transit website](#).

If you take the bus often, it is cheaper to buy a bus pass or tickets. You can buy these at grocery stores, drugstores, and convenience stores. You can find information about where to buy tickets and passes on [bctransit.com](#) or in your local Rider's Guide. There is a lower price for full-time students (up to Grade 12) and seniors (65 years or older) in most communities. To pay a lower price, you may need to show ID, such as a student card or driver's license. Some communities offer free bus rides for children.

When you get on the bus, you need to pay the exact fare. The bus does not give change. If you pay in cash, you should carry coins. If you pay with tickets, 1 ticket gives you 1 bus ride. If you get a monthly pass, you can ride as many times as you want for 1 month. If you need to take more than 1 bus ride in 1 day, you can buy a DayPASS. This lets you take as many buses as you want in 1 day.

In communities without a DayPASS, you can ask for a transfer. A



transfer is a ticket that lets you take another bus within 1 hour without paying again. After you pay your fare, tell the bus driver you need to transfer. The bus driver will give you a transfer ticket to show you already paid. Some communities don't use transfer tickets. Check on the BC Transit website or ask the bus driver. [Learn about the rules in your community](#) on the BC Transit website.

Transportation for people with disabilities

In B.C., people with mobility aids (such as wheelchairs or scooters) can travel on all public transit buses. There is extra room at the front of the bus, near the door. This extra room is for people with mobility aids. There are special buses for people with mobility aids who need extra help. These buses provide door-to-door service – they can pick you up at your home and take you to your destination. The bus operators will help you get on and off the bus. You share the trip with other riders. To use this service, you must register first. You must call before to book your trip. You should try to book a week before.

In the Vancouver area, [TransLink customers with a HandyCard](#) can bring a helper on any public transportation (including the bus, the SkyTrain, and the SeaBus). The helper does not have to pay. When entering the SkyTrain, HandyCard pass holders and their helpers can go through the gates together. HandyCard customers can get Taxi Saver coupons. These coupons give you a 50% discount on your taxi fare.

Outside of the Vancouver area, if you are a registered handyDART customer with a handyPASS, or if you are blind and have a pass from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) Foundation, you can bring along a helper on buses. The helper does not have to pay. Tell the transit operator if the person travelling with you is your helper. Many communities have programs to show people how to use mobility aids on buses. Call your local BC Transit office to make an appointment to learn how to use the aids.

Visit the [BC Transit website](#) to see if your community has a handyDART service. Find your community's name and click on Rider Information. Look for the handyDART link. In some communities, handyPASS (BC Transit) customers can get Taxi Saver vouchers.



These vouchers give you a 50% discount on your taxi fare.

For people who are visually impaired

If you need help finding your stop, sit close to the front of the bus. You can also ask the driver to tell you when you arrive at your stop. Most TransLink buses in the Vancouver area have both visual and audio announcements of the next stop. All SkyTrain cars announce the next stop. If you have a disability and require assistance at a SkyTrain station, please call 604 520-5518.

Outside of Vancouver, next stops are announced on BC Transit buses. In some communities, the buses have a recorded announcement for each stop. In some communities, the driver calls out the name of each stop.

Taxis

Taxis are fast and easy, but they can be expensive. Most cities and towns have taxi companies. You can order a taxi by telephone. Some companies also have a website or a smartphone app. At the end of your trip, the meter in the taxi shows how much to pay. In Canada, people usually give taxi drivers a tip (extra money). A tip is 10 to 15% of the fare.

gov.bc.ca/gov/content/transportation/passenger-travel/buses-taxis-limos

Walking

You should cross streets only at a corner or a crosswalk. You should always obey traffic lights. Many street corners have crosswalks. These are lines painted on the road or a sign. It is against the law to cross the street in the middle of a block. This is called jaywalking. If the police see you jaywalking, you may have to pay a fine. Cars should stop at crosswalks

to let people cross. B.C. law says cars always have to stop for people walking, but you should always be careful. Look left first, then right.

Please refer to the Newcomer's Guide for more information about:

- cycling in B.C.
- ride hailing
- car sharing



- carpooling
- car rentals
- travelling between communities in B.C. by bus, plane, ferry, or train

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Managing your money

Canadian money

The money used in Canada is the Canadian dollar. 1 dollar (\$) has 100 cents (¢). Money is also called cash. Cash is coins and bills. Bills (paper money) are \$5, \$10, \$20, \$50, and \$100. Canada uses 5 kinds of coins. One cent (\$0.01) coins are called pennies. The Canadian Government does not make pennies anymore. The smallest amount of cash is 1 nickel (5 cents). Many prices still include cents in the price (for example, \$1.99). If you pay in cash, stores will “round up” or “round down” to the nearest 5 cents. This is because there is no 1 cent coin.

- If the cost is \$1.01 or \$1.02, you will pay \$1.00
- If the cost is between \$1.03 and \$1.07, you will pay \$1.05
- If the cost is \$1.08 or \$1.09, you will pay \$1.10

If you pay with a credit card or a debit card, you will pay the exact cost.

Shopping and sales taxes

Most stores open around 9 a.m. or 10 a.m. (in the morning) and close at 5:30 p.m. or 6 p.m. (in the evening). Some stores, shopping centres, or malls may stay open until late in the evening. Many stores are closed on Sundays. Most grocery stores and large department stores are open 7 days a week.

In B.C., you have to pay tax on most products and services you buy. There are 2 kinds of tax: Provincial Sales Tax (PST) and Goods and Services Tax (GST). PST is 7% and GST is 5%. Sometimes you only have to pay 1 tax. Sometimes you have to pay both.

Most products and services show the price before tax. Taxes are added to the price of the item when you pay for it. The price on the item might be \$10, but the person at the payment counter will ask



you to pay \$11.20. The extra \$1.20 is the tax: 50 cents for the PST, and 70 cents for the GST. The price in the store is fixed. People do not ask (bargain) for a lower price in stores. Some special items have more taxes added. There are extra taxes for alcohol, gasoline, e-cigarettes and e-juice (vaping), and vehicles.

Metric and imperial measure

Canada officially uses the metric system to measure:

- distance and speed (kilometres, or km)
- gas (litres, or l)
- temperature (degrees Celsius, or °C)

However, Canadians also use imperial measurements for weights (ounces and pounds). Food can be priced in grams and kilograms, or in ounces and pounds.

Banking

Opening a bank account

You can open an account at a bank, credit union, or trust company. Get information about different bank accounts and different companies before you choose. Find out about the kinds of accounts and what the fees are. Sometimes, you can be charged when you put in (deposit), move (transfer), or take out (withdraw) your money. Some accounts pay interest on the money in your accounts. Ask questions about banking fees and interest rates.

Types of accounts

Chequing accounts

A chequing account lets you use a special piece of paper (cheque) to pay someone. Most Canadians do not write cheques anymore. Most Canadians use online banking and debit cards for everyday transactions and purchases. Some chequing accounts charge monthly service fees. Some charge for different transactions. Most chequing accounts do not pay interest.

Savings accounts

All savings accounts pay interest. Different banks give different interest rates. Most savings accounts do not allow you to write cheques.



Chequing-savings accounts

These accounts pay interest. You can also write cheques. Different banks have different fees and interest rates.

Term deposits and Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs)

These accounts usually pay more interest than saving accounts. However, you have to leave your money in for a certain length of time (a term). Once you put your money in, you have to wait until the end of the term to take it out. If you take your money out early, you will lose some or all of the interest.

Paying by cash, debit card, credit card, or cheque

Many Canadians use cash to pay for items. However, most now use debit and credit cards. Debit cards let you pay money straight out of your bank account. Most stores and restaurants take debit cards. You can get debit cards from your bank or credit union. Credit cards let you buy things now and pay for them later. You can get credit cards from banks, department stores, and gas companies. If you do not pay the full amount of your monthly credit card bill, you have to pay interest. Different credit card companies charge different rates. Check to see how much interest they charge. This can make a big difference in how much you have to pay.

You should protect your debit and credit cards the same way you protect your money. Keep them in a safe place. You need a secret number (personal identification number or PIN) to use your debit card and credit card. Be sure to protect your PIN.

Some Canadians use their debit card or their credit card through their smartphone, and in some places can pay for items by scanning the phone screen. You can also “tap” your credit or debit card when you pay for items. With “tap”, you do not have to enter your PIN. Cheques are sometimes used instead of cash. Many stores do not take cheques. Before shopping, you should ask the cashier if they take cheques. You will need identification (ID) to pay with a cheque.



Bank machines

Banks, credit unions, and some trust companies have bank machines. They are called automated teller machines (ATMs). To use

bank machines, you need a debit card from your bank or credit union. You can also withdraw cash using your credit card, but you will pay a high interest rate. ATMs are open 24 hours a day. You can find ATMs in convenience stores and other public places. You can withdraw money or check your account at any ATM.

If the ATM belongs to a different bank or company, you may have to pay a small fee. Ask your bank when and where they charge extra fees. To pay bills and deposit or transfer money, you may need to use an ATM that belongs to your bank.

Banking by phone, internet, and smartphone

Many Canadians do their banking online from their home computer or smartphone. You can check your account balance, send or receive money, transfer money between accounts, and pay your bills. Some banks may have services in different languages. You can also do your banking by telephone. For this, you have to call the bank and answer security questions.

Some banks have mobile phone apps for online banking. Some apps let you take a photo of a cheque and deposit it into your account using your smartphone. Ask your bank or credit union about their online and mobile banking services.

Security is important if you are banking online. Criminals can steal your information and money online. When you log into your bank account, you should only use a private computer. Do not use a public computer (for example, at a library). Put a safety program (security software) on your own computer. Use a secure private internet connection. Do not use public WiFi to log into your bank account.

Do not respond to any emails asking for your account information. Do not click on any links inside of emails or text messages from unknown senders. They may be scam emails or messages. Scammers send you viruses that let them steal your information. The Canadian Bankers Association website has information to help you [identify banking scams](#).



Sending money to other countries

You can send money to people in other countries through a bank or a foreign exchange company. You can also mail a money order (also called a draft). Money orders can be sent from a bank, foreign exchange company, or post office. Before you send money, make sure the payment can be accepted in the country you are sending it to. Some institutions cannot accept certain kinds of payment. You may have to pay an extra fee to send money to another country. Different companies charge different fees. Check the fees with different companies.

For more information about banking

The Canadian Bankers Association website can answer many [questions about banking in Canada](#). Find information about choosing the right bank account, credit and debit cards, mobile payments, cheques, mortgages, online security, and many other banking topics.

Paying taxes

Canadians pay taxes on money they earn and on most things they buy. Governments use these taxes to pay for services such as roads, parks, community centres, medical care, welfare, schools, and universities.

Income tax

All adults living in B.C. should file (fill in and send) an income tax return (form) each year. You must send the form to the federal government. The form tells how much tax you should pay on your income. If your income is high, you may pay more tax. If your income is low, you may pay less tax. The income tax form also helps you find out if you can apply for tax credits and other benefits.

Employers deduct (take) income tax from employees' pay cheques and pay it to the government. If your employer deducts too much tax, the federal government will pay you back. If your employer didn't deduct enough tax, you may have to pay more.

You have to report any income from investments. You also have to report income from outside Canada. Even if you did not earn any money in Canada, you should still file your federal income taxes. You



can file your income tax form in different ways. You can fill and print a tax form and send it by mail. You can also file your tax form over the internet. The first time you file your income tax form in B.C., you must send a printed form by mail. For [more information](#), visit the Canada Revenue Agency website.

Every year, the [Community Volunteer Income Tax Program](#) helps more than half a million Canadians file their income tax returns. You can also pay someone to help you, like an accountant or a tax preparation company. Your local [settlement agency](#) may also be able to help you.

Sales taxes and credits

The B.C. and Canadian governments charge tax on many of the things you buy. This is called “sales tax”. Sales tax is not included in the price of most items. It is added to your bill when you pay for your items. There is no sales tax on necessary items like groceries and clothing.

People with low incomes may be eligible for tax credits (payments) from [the B.C.](#) and [Canadian](#) governments.

Canada Child Benefit

The Canada Child Benefit is a monthly payment to [help families with children](#) under age 18.

Property taxes

If you own a home, you need to pay property tax. The home you live in most of the time is called your principal residence. The Home Owner Grant Program reduces the amount of residential property tax eligible British Columbians pay for their principal residence.

If your income is low and the value of your home is high, your home owner grant may be reduced. In this situation, you may apply for a low-income supplement. This supplement will make up for the reduction in the grant caused by your home’s high value. [Get more information](#) and find out if you are eligible for home owner grants.



Property tax deferment programs

If you cannot afford to pay your taxes now, you can [apply to defer payments](#) (pay them later). Property tax deferral programs are low-interest loans. Homeowners who qualify can defer all or part of their property taxes until they can afford to pay them, or until they sell their home, transfer it to someone else, or after their death.

Property Transfer Tax

When a change in ownership of a property is registered in B.C., you must pay Property Transfer Tax. Some home buyers can [apply for exemption](#) (not paying the tax). In some circumstances, you may be exempt if you are a provincial nominee.

Financial help for seniors

Old Age Security

[Old Age Security \(OAS\) pension](#) is a monthly payment for seniors aged 65 and older who meet the Canadian legal status and residence requirements. You may need to apply to receive it. Old Age Security is provided by the Canadian government.

Guaranteed Income Supplement

The [Guaranteed Income Supplement \(GIS\)](#) is a monthly benefit for people who receive the Old Age Security pension, have a low income, and are living in Canada. The Guaranteed Income Supplement is provided by the Canadian government.

Senior's Supplement

Seniors who receive OAS and GIS may also qualify for the [Senior's Supplement](#). If you are eligible, you will receive the Senior's Supplement automatically. The amount depends on your income. It is paid automatically to everyone who qualifies. If you qualify, do not need to apply. The Senior's Supplement is provided by the B.C. government.

Seniors' discounts

Many organizations and governments offer special programs or prices for seniors. There is no legal definition of a "senior", so each organization decides for itself who can use the program. Some are for people who are older than 55, some are for people over 60, and



some (including most government programs) are for people older than 65.

To get a discount, seniors may need to show a government-issued ID, like a driver's licence, BC Services Card, or passport.

Investing money

There are many ways to invest money. Banks and other financial companies sell investments such as term deposits, mutual funds, Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs), and treasury bills. Talk to someone at your bank, credit union, or trust company. You can also talk with an investment counsellor or financial advisor.

Be careful of people who try to cheat you and steal your money. Scammers may say that their investment is "risk-free" or "guaranteed". They may try to scare you by saying you will miss a good chance to earn money. Never give your money to anyone without confirming that it is safe. Learn [how to identify investment fraud](#).

- [Banking in Canada](#)
- Prosper Canada – financial education [webinars and guides](#)
- Prosper Canada - [money management tools](#) for newcomers
- Financial Consumer Agency of Canada – [Financial Toolkit](#)
- Government of Canada – [Manage Your Money](#)
- [Office of Consumer Affairs](#)
- [BC Securities Commission](#) is an independent agency of the provincial government.
- Credit Counselling Society provides [financial education workshops and tools](#)

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Child care

Types of child care

There are 4 kinds of child care in B.C.:

- Licensed child care
- Registered licence-not-required child care
- Licence-not-required child care
- In-child's-own-home care



Licensed child care

Licensed child care facilities are monitored and regularly inspected by regional health authority community care licensing programs. They must meet legislated standards for health and safety, staffing qualifications, record keeping, space and equipment, child-to-staff ratios, and programming. Staff at licensed child care facilities are educated to care for children. Facility operators must follow the Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation.

Registered Licence-Not-Required Child Care

These are unlicensed care providers who must have registered with a Child Care Resource and Referral Centre. If they have registered, it means they have completed:

- first aid training
- criminal record check (for everyone over the age 12 who lives in the home)
- character references
- home safety assessment
- child care training courses or workshops

Registered care providers also have access to support, training, resources, and group liability insurance. Contact your local [Child Care Resource and Referral Centre \(CCRR\)](#). They can help you find a licensed or registered, licence-not required child care providers who may have open child care spaces in your area.

Licence-Not-Required Child Care

These child care providers can only legally provide care for 1 or 2 children (or more if they are from the same family), in addition to their own. They are not registered with the CCRR, and they are not licensed, monitored or inspected. Licence-not-required child care providers do not have to meet the health and safety standards that are required of licensed providers. Parents and guardians are responsible to oversee the care and safety of their children when using licence-not-required child care.



In-Child's-Own-Home Care

This is when parents arrange for child care at home – for example, a nanny or a babysitter. Parents or guardians must decide how to

choose and hire the child care provider, who becomes their employee. Under this arrangement, the employer needs to:

- make regular payments to Employment Insurance and the Canada Pension Plan
- register the employment situation with Revenue Canada and WorkSafeBC

Get [more information and details](#) about these 4 types of child care.

Finding child care

Childcare BC has information about [finding child care in your community](#).

There are Child Care Resource and Referral centres in communities across B.C. Visit the government of B.C. website to [find the nearest centre](#).

Child care costs

Child care can be expensive. There is a B.C. government program that can help eligible families with the cost of the licensed child care.

Affordable Child Care Benefit

The Affordable Child Care Benefit helps families pay for child care. It is paid every month. The amount you can receive depends on your income, family size, and type of child care. Visit the website to [find out if you are eligible](#) and to apply.

Starting your own child care program

If you decide to operate a child care program in your own home, you will have to follow the rules and laws. The Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation, along with director of licensing standards of practice, describe the requirements for licensed child care.

Health authority community care facility licensing programs are responsible for assessing and issuing facility licences. They can provide information on how to get started.



The B.C. government has information about starting a child care program:

- [Licensed child care facility](#)
- [Registered, licence-not-required child care program](#)

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Sending and receiving mail

Canada Post delivers mail to homes and businesses every weekday (Monday to Friday). You do not have to pay to receive mail. Letters and papers are put in your mailbox. You do not have to be home. To receive large packages, you need to show your ID. If you are not home, the carrier will leave a note. The note tells you when and where you can pick up the package. This is usually at a nearby post office or outlet. Bring your photo ID to pick up the package.

Sending letters and packages

You can send mail from a Canada Post office or a Canada Post mailbox. Some stores have a Canada Post outlet. All letters mailed to addresses in Canada must have a postal code. A postal code has 3 numbers and 3 letters. It shows what street, city, and province you live in. If you do not know the postal code for an address, visit the [Canada Post website](#) and click “Find a Postal Code”.

You must pay postage fees to send letters and packages. You pay postage by buying stamps. You must put stamps on the letter or package to show that you paid the postage. Postage rates are different depending on the size, weight, and destination (the place you send it to). Heavy packages cost more. Heavy letters may also cost more. International postage can be expensive. Postage and parcel rates may also be different between outlets. You should check the rate before you send a package. Visit the [Canada Post website](#) and click “Find a Rate”.

Postage rates sometimes go up. You can buy permanent stamps. These stamps have the letter “P” on them. Permanent stamps are equal to the current postal rate. If the postage rate goes up, the stamp value also goes up. This way you don’t have to pay extra.



Permanent stamps only work for mailing letters inside of Canada.

Other mail and delivery services

There are different ways to send letters and packages. For example, you can pay extra to deliver items faster. You can track packages, so you know when they are delivered. You can also buy insurance for valuable letters and packages. Insurance will pay for lost or damaged packages. Private courier companies deliver packages quickly, but they are often more expensive.

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