



Reporting Sexual Misconduct What to Expect

Do you think you have experienced sexual misconduct by a BC physician?

Call us at 604-733-7758, or
toll free at 1-800-461-3008.

Email inquiries@cpsbc.ca

As BC's medical regulator, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC investigates all complaints against physicians in the province—including sexual misconduct complaints. We have a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to sexual contact between a physician and a patient—even when that contact might be considered consensual.

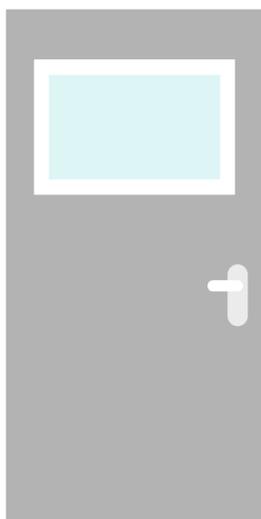
Sexual misconduct by physicians, also referred to as “professional misconduct of a sexual nature,” includes any of the following:

- a. sexual intercourse or other forms of physical sexual relations between a physician and a patient
- b. touching of a sexual nature of a patient by a physician
- c. behaviour or remarks of a sexual nature by a physician towards a patient

This does not include touching, behaviour and remarks made by a physician to a patient that are necessary for appropriate clinical care.¹

The College recognizes that coming forward with a complaint about sexual misconduct can be very difficult. This resource was created to help identify sexual misconduct and provide information about how sexual misconduct can be reported to the College.

¹ Section 1-18 of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC's Bylaws, *Health Professions Act*, RSBC 1996, c.183.



What is expected of physicians?

In the routine practice of medicine, physicians may use their hands to touch various parts of your body during necessary clinical exams. When that happens, you can expect your physician to tell you what they are going to do, provide you with privacy while you are changing, ask permission to touch you, let you ask questions, and treat you with respect. For sensitive examinations, or when removing clothing is necessary, your physician is expected to ask you whether you wish to have another person (of your choice) present during the physical examination or procedure.

If you wear a head covering (such as a veil, hijab, niqab) your physician may ask you to remove it while providing medical care. While it is your right to keep your head covering on, this may limit your physician's ability to complete a full medical assessment.

Physicians must always act professionally and ethically when interacting with patients. Sexual involvement of any kind is unacceptable in the patient-physician relationship, even if the patient consents. The College expects physicians to:

- establish and maintain clear professional boundaries with patients
- always act in the patient's best interest
- never terminate a patient-physician relationship to pursue a sexual relationship
- be aware that ending the patient-physician relationship does not eliminate the possibility that sexual contact between a physician and a former patient may be considered professional misconduct

What is sexual misconduct?

Sexual misconduct is a broad term encompassing any behaviour of a sexual nature by a physician, whether or not the patient consented. Sexual misconduct may be verbal or physical, can occur in person or virtually, and may include expressions of thoughts and feelings or gestures that are of a sexual nature or that reasonably may be interpreted by a patient or patient's representative as sexual in nature.

Some examples of sexual misconduct include:

- inappropriate comments or gestures such as when a physician makes sexually suggestive or seductive comments, unnecessary comments about sexual relationships or sexual orientation, or sexually offensive comments or jokes
- asks a patient on a date
- gives unwanted hugs or kisses
- conducts unnecessary or improper physical examinations

How can you report sexual misconduct?

You can report sexual misconduct to the College by

- submitting the [Complaint Form](#),
- calling 604-733-7758 or toll free at 1-800-461-3008, or
- emailing inquiries@cpsbc.ca.

When you file a sexual misconduct complaint, you will be assisted by a College staff member who has training in sexual misconduct matters and trauma-informed care.

Can you remain anonymous?

While you can contact the College anonymously and make general inquiries, once you reveal the physician's identity, we need to act on that information quickly. Please be advised that if we proceed with an investigation, we must disclose your name to the physician who is being investigated so that they have an opportunity to respond to the allegations (or inquiry).

To learn more, read the College's practice standard [Sexual Misconduct](#).

