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Popular topics:

Learn about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and actions being taken to protect the health of Albertans.

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Current situation

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A pneumonia outbreak, now known to be caused by COVID-19, was identified in Wuhan, China on December 31, 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the outbreak of the virus a public health emergency.

There are 7 cases in Alberta and 77 cases across Canada. The risk to Albertans is still low.

- [Testing protocols and travel recommendations](#)
- [Updates from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer](#)

Last updated: March 10 at 8:45 am

Current risk level in Alberta

The current risk level is low.

Risk is determined by assessing how likely Albertans are to be exposed to the virus in the province. Currently, Albertans have a very low chance of contracting COVID-19. If this changes in the coming weeks, the risk level in Alberta will be updated accordingly.

Cases and testing

Cases in Alberta and Canada

The cases in Canada have been travel-related and have been isolated to prevent further transmission.

Location	In Alberta	In Canada
Confirmed or presumptive cases	7	77
Deaths	0	1

Testing in Alberta

Alberta is testing for COVID-19. We are acting out of an excess of caution even when the likelihood of exposure is small or improbable. Testing numbers are updated every Monday and Friday, and are current as of March 9.

Test results	Negative	Positive
Number of completed tests	1,452	7

About coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause respiratory illness in people, ranging from mild common colds to severe illnesses. Others cause illness in animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people then spread from person to person through close contact.

Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the virus that have not been previously identified in humans.

COVID-19 vs. Influenza

In some ways, COVID-19 is similar to influenza (also known as the flu):

- Both COVID-19 and the flu cause respiratory disease in people who get sick.
- Both are spread the same way, via small droplets from the nose and mouth.
- Neither one is spread through the air over long distances and times, unlike a disease like the measles.

However, there are some key differences between COVID-19 and the flu:

- COVID-19 does not appear to transmit as efficiently as influenza. Only those with symptoms seem to be mainly spreading the disease. This means that when people with symptoms are isolated, controlling spread is possible.
- We currently have no specific vaccine or treatment for COVID-19.
- COVID-19 causes severe disease in a higher percentage of cases than seasonal influenza. Estimates of mortality in COVID-19 cases depend on many things, but on average they range from about 1-2 deaths per 100 people infected. By comparison, seasonal influenza is deadly in about 1 in every 1000 who are infected.
- Because COVID-19 can cause such a serious illness, it is critical to keep it from spreading by having people with a cough or fever stay home and away from others.

Find more information on [symptoms of COVID-19](#).

How it spreads

At this time, it appears COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person spread by:

- larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze
- touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth

Studies suggest that the virus generally only lasts a few hours on a surface, though it may be possible for it to last several days under ideal conditions.

While there is person-to-person spread, current evidence indicates it is not airborne through long distances or times. There is no evidence that it's capable of being transmitted by imported goods.

Symptoms

Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other respiratory illnesses. The most common symptoms include:

- fever
- cough
- extreme tiredness

Most people (about 80%) recover from this disease without needing special treatment.

However, it can cause serious illness. Those who are older, and those with other medical problems are more likely to develop serious illness, which can include:

- difficulty breathing
- pneumonia

There is a risk of death in severe cases.


While we are still learning about how COVID-19 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

Treatment

For now, there is no specific vaccine for COVID-19.

The virus is so new and different that it needs its own vaccine. Researchers in many different countries are now working to develop a vaccine.

Supportive care has been used in treatment of patients with COVID-19 and some medications are being tested to see if they can help patients with severe disease.

Consult [Health Link 811](#)  or your health care provider if you're:

- concerned about your health, or
- feeling ill and recently travelled to China or another affected area

Prevent and prepare

Follow these tips to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses and prepare your household in case you need to self-isolate at home.


How to prevent the spread

It's important to remember that the risk for Albertans is still considered low at this time. Public health measures are in place to quickly identify potential COVID-19 cases and prevent the infection from spreading.

Prevent the spread


Influenza and other common viruses remain the most likely cause of a respiratory infection.

To protect yourself and others:

- use good hygiene practices, such as frequent handwashing
- cover coughs and sneezes
- avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill
- contact your primary health provider or [Health Link 811](#)  if you have questions or concerns about your health

Wearing medical masks

Masks can be very important in certain situations. When sick, wearing a mask helps prevent us from passing illnesses on to other people. This is why we ask people who have a cough or respiratory symptoms to wear a mask and wash their hands when visiting an emergency department or clinic.

- If you are sick, wearing a mask helps prevent passing the illness on to other people.
- If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended as they don't provide full protection and can create a false sense of security.
- See [appropriate infection prevention and control precautions for health-care settings](#) .

How to prepare

For Albertans looking to prepare for COVID-19, Alberta public health officials are recommending the following:

- Create a household plan of action. This can include these elements:
 - Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan.

- Meet with household members, other relatives, and friends to discuss what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community and what the needs of each person will be.
- Plan ways to care for those who might be at greater risk for serious complications. This includes practical steps like ensuring you have sufficient medication and determining what supplies are needed, and if they can be delivered.
- Talk with your neighbors about emergency planning.
- Create a list of local organizations that you and your household can contact in the event you need access to information, health care services, support, and resources.
- Create an emergency contact list.
- Practice good personal health habits and plan for home-based actions:
 - Practice everyday preventive actions, like those listed in the prevention section.
 - Choose a room in your home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy. Identify a separate bathroom for the sick person to use, if possible. Plan to clean these rooms, as needed, when someone is sick.
- Be prepared if your child's school or childcare facility is temporarily dismissed
- Plan for potential changes at your workplace.
 - Learn about your employer's emergency operations plan.
 - Ask about what sick-leave policies and telework options are available if needed.
- Stockpiling of goods is not recommended at this time. While it's always best practice to have three days worth of supplies on-hand, we are not recommending Albertans purchase food or other materials in bulk.
- Resources:
 - [Building an emergency kit](#)

Info for Albertans

If you have COVID-19 symptoms and have travelled outside Canada or were exposed to someone who has COVID-19, stay home and call Health Link 811 for instructions.

Do not go to a health care facility without consulting 811 first. If you need immediate medical attention, call 911 and inform them that you you may have COVID-19.

Info for travellers

As a precautionary measure, people returning from outside Canada should follow the monitoring and self-isolation steps below.


Returning travellers should not visit emergency departments or urgent care centres for testing of COVID-

19. Calling Health Link 811 is the best way to get quick assessment and testing, if needed.

Monitor for symptoms

Returning from outside of Canada

Anyone returning from outside of Canada, should follow these steps:


- monitor yourself for symptoms such as cough or fever for 14 days
- self-isolate yourself and call [Health Link 811](#)  for instructions on follow-up testing if you:
 - feel ill after returning and/or experience symptoms
 - were in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19
 - were in a health-care facility in an affected country


Self-isolate

Returning from Grand Princess Cruise, Iran or Hubei province, China

If you have returned from the following locations, isolate yourself until 14 days have passed since that trip, even if you are feeling well:



- Grand Princess cruise ship
- Iran
- Hubei province, China

You can isolate yourself by following these [self-isolation guidelines](#) :

- avoid close contact with other people, especially those with chronic conditions, a compromised immune system, or seniors
- do not attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings
- watch for symptoms like fever, cough or difficulty breathing in yourself or a family member
- call [Health Link 811](#)  for instructions if any symptoms begin

Departing travellers

If you are planning travel outside of Canada, consult the:

- [Public Health Agency of Canada's Travel Health Advisories page](#) 
- [World Health Organization's bulletins](#)  for updated travel advice


Info for seniors


The most important ways to prevent and control respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, in facilities with seniors and other vulnerable groups are:

- Anyone who is sick with fever or cough should not visit loved ones in hospitals, long-term care or other supported living accommodations.
- People in these locations are at the highest risk of complications from both influenza and COVID-19, as well as other respiratory viruses.
- Anyone who is feeling well and not showing symptoms can continue to visit their loved ones in these homes.
- All health-care workers returning from travelling should be assessed by their own Occupational Health Services or AHS Public Health before returning to work (regardless of whether or not they have symptoms).




Info for schools

Alberta public health officials are recommending the following actions as a precaution:

- If a student has visited a Grand Princess Cruise, Iran or China's Hubei province in the last 14 days, it is recommended that they self-isolate until two weeks have passed since that visit. This is recommended even if they are feeling well.
- Parents should call [Health Link 811](#)  for additional precautions and follow-up testing if their children have travelled to anywhere outside of Canada and experienced any of the following:
 - contact with someone who was suspected or confirmed to have the novel coronavirus
 - were in a health-care facility
 - have symptoms, such as cough or fever

If a student does not meet the exposure criteria above, they do not need to stay away from school and they will likely not be tested for COVID-19 as they do not meet the testing criteria. Therefore, requesting that the student provide a physician's note is not appropriate. For health-related questions or concerns, please call [Health Link at 811](#) .

Self-isolation is a precautionary measure and does not mean that the individual is infected with COVID-19. In the event that testing determines an individual is a presumptive or confirmed case, public health officials will immediately connect with any close contacts believed to be at risk. In schools where some students have been identified as close contacts, Alberta Health has not recommended other students be kept home. Health officials will already be ensuring that all appropriate precautions are being taken.


- [Albert Health memo to school superintendents](#)  - March 3, 2020 (PDF, 48K B)
- [Alberta Health memo to parents](#)  - March 3, 2020 (PDF, 51 KB)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada guidance for schools](#) 

Info for employers

Alberta public health officials are recommending the following actions as a precaution:

- If employees have visited a Grand Princess Cruise, Iran or China's Hubei province in the last 14 days, it is recommended they isolate themselves until two weeks have passed since that visit. This is

It is recommended they isolate themselves until two weeks have passed since that visit. This is recommended even if they are feeling well.



- Employees should self-isolate and call [Health Link 811](#)  for additional precautions and follow-up testing if they have travelled to anywhere outside of Canada and experienced any of the following:
 - contact with someone who was suspected or confirmed to have the novel coronavirus
 - were in a health-care facility
 - have symptoms, such as cough or fever

If an employee does not meet the exposure criteria above, they do not need to stay away from work, and do not need any testing or a physician's note to attend work.

If an employee is asked to self-isolate:


- Employees and employers should work together to explore alternate working arrangements. This could include:
 - Working from home or remotely
 - Doing work that does not require the employee to contact other people in the community or at work.
- If an alternate working arrangement is not possible, employees can use paid sick time if their employer offers this.
- Employees may also be able to use five days of sick time without risk of losing their job with the personal and family responsibility leave, but this time is unpaid.
- Employers should consider their business continuity plans, and think about how the possibility of COVID-19 could impact their workplace. In order to prepare, we recommend plans are made to protect employees, limit spread in workplaces, and ensure continuity of critical services if staff are ill or self-isolating.

Resources:

- [Respiratory viruses and the workplace: OHS information for employers, supervisors and workers](#) 
- [Business continuity planning](#) 

Info for municipalities


Alberta and other provinces are providing advice based on the best current evidence and guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

General public health recommendations in communities if COVID-19 spreads in Canada are available on the [Government of Canada website](#) .


If hosting an upcoming event or conference, consider the following:

- Mass gatherings can contribute to the transmission of respiratory pathogens, such as COVID-19.
- Since mass gathering events are generally unique, the advice varies regarding which measures

should be undertaken.

- Currently there are no formal restrictions on mass gatherings. Each community or event organizer should undertake a risk assessment to determine what makes sense for them.
- Decisions regarding mass gatherings can be considered on a continuum, including
 - no changes,
 - enhanced communication to attendees,
 - risk mitigation strategies being employed without cancelling the event (such as distancing measures and making hand hygiene supplies available),
 - postponement or cancellation of the event.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada has posted a [risk assessment tool](#) .

If helping local organizations plan for a COVID-19 outbreak, consider the following:


- [Business continuity planning](#) , is vitally important to prepare critical operations for any potential interruption.
- Field officers from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency are available to support municipalities, First Nations and Metis.

Settlements with their emergency management and business continuity planning.

To support the health system, communities should:

- Promote 811 as a source of information and to refer those with health-related concerns.
- Promote Alberta Labour's "[Respiratory Viruses and the Workplace](#)" for workplace guidance.
- Review existing business continuity plans to assess if disruptions from staff absenteeism have been considered, especially for critical operations.
- Stay informed about the situation in Alberta via the Alberta Health Services or Alberta Health COVID-19 websites.

Resources

- [Respiratory viruses and the workplace: OHS information for employers, supervisors and workers](#)
- [Business continuity planning](#) 

Actions being taken

Alberta's public health officials are carefully monitoring the situation in Canada, China and around the world, and are ready to respond. They are:

- working closely with federal, provincial and territorial partners to share information and assess potential health risks
- ensuring our health system is ready to respond effectively if needed

- ensuring front-line health professionals have information about the virus so they can:
 - take recommended actions
 - promptly report suspected cases to public health officials
- updating self-isolation and self-monitoring recommendations for returning travellers experiencing symptoms, as required
- tracing all close contacts of presumptive and confirmed cases, testing and isolating those who are symptomatic, and asking even those who are well to self-isolate for 14 days after their last contact with the case

Find out more under the [info for Albertans section](#).

Chief Medical Officer updates

Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw issued the following statement for Albertans on March 9:

“ I am here today to announce that three new cases of COVID-19 have been detected in our province. These are the fifth, sixth, and seventh cases of COVID-19 in Alberta.

"Case 5 is a woman in her 70s from the Edmonton zone, who is a close contact of an Edmonton zone man announced on March 6th as a presumptive case of COVID-19. She was also onboard the Grand Princess Cruise before returning to Alberta on Feb. 21.

"Case 6 is a man in his thirties from the Calgary zone. He is a close contact of the Calgary zone woman announced yesterday as a presumptive case of COVID-19. He had travelled to Ukraine, Netherlands and Turkey and returned to Alberta on March 2. His symptoms began after his return.

"Health officials had already reached out to all individuals who may have been in close contact with

both of these new cases as a part of the previous investigations. Identifying close contacts who have been exposed to COVID-19 is an important part of Alberta's response to this outbreak.

"As I mentioned yesterday, COVID-19 does not spread like measles. It does not travel through the air over long distances and times. However, it can spread person-to-person by larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze or by touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. This means that close contacts are the ones at greatest risk of contracting the virus, so these cases are not surprising.

"Again, quickly catching these cases before they have a chance to spread is what our approach is designed to do.

"In addition to these two cases, a seventh case was also identified yesterday. Case 7 is a woman in her 50s who returned from a Caribbean cruise on the MS Braemar cruise ship on March 4. Her symptoms started after her return. She was tested yesterday at the Calgary assessment centre, and her test came back positive late last night.

"All three new cases are in isolation at home, and are expected to make a full recovery.

"These cases are examples of public health in action. Over the weekend, countless hours have been put in by staff all over the province to make our system work. I particularly want to highlight the incredible work done to get assessment centres running over the weekend, expanding capacity at Health Link, and tracing contacts of cases.

"I want to make special mention of our provincial public health laboratory, where capacity for running tests for COVID-19 has dramatically increased. Yesterday alone, 700 tests for COVID were done, meaning that almost 1,000 tests have been completed in Alberta in the past two days.

"This is a remarkable accomplishment and a testament to the fine health care professionals in this province.

"All cases of COVID-19 announced in Alberta are now confirmed. From now on, positive samples tested by Alberta laboratories no longer require further confirmation from the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

"The events of the past week, both in Alberta and globally, are significant. More countries around the world have cases, and some of these countries are grappling with large outbreaks. At this point, it is likely that we will be dealing with this virus worldwide for many months to come.

"I want to be clear that this virus is not influenza. In cases in China, about 1 in 5 of those infected with COVID-19 had a severe illness, which is much more than we would see with influenza.

"Several weeks ago, influenza was a greater threat to Albertans because there was very little risk of exposure to COVID-19 cases globally. The global picture has changed, and while the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in Alberta is still low at this time, worldwide the risk is rising.

"What does this mean to Albertans? It means that all of us need to be engaged in this response. We need to start thinking about what our new normal will look like over the coming months. With no vaccine for this virus likely to be available for a year or more, we need to protect each other.

"We can do this by covering coughs and sneezes, washing hands regularly, and most importantly, staying home and away from others when we are sick.

"It is time to start greeting each other with elbow bumps or waves instead of handshakes. This is not an over-reaction, but rather a very practical way of limiting spread of germs.

"I want to particularly underline that, if you are sick, do not visit loved ones in hospitals or long-term care facilities. People in these locations are at the highest risk of complications from both influenza and COVID-19.

"All returning travelers from anywhere outside Canada need to be vigilant for illness, quickly isolate themselves if they feel ill, and call 811 for assessment and testing. Do not go to an emergency department, urgent care centre or your family doctor's office for this assessment.

"While the current risk of catching the virus in Alberta remains low, this may change in the coming weeks. Regardless of risk level, we will continue taking whatever steps are necessary to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe.

"Together, we can protect each other and keep our communities healthy.

"We will continue to keep Albertans fully informed as events unfold in the days ahead. Our top priority is, and always will be, protecting the health of Albertans."

[Go back to COVID-19 info for Albertans](#)

Resources

- [Government of Canada's 2019 New Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\): Outbreak Notification](#) -[English](#) [↗] | [Simplified Chinese](#) [↗]
- [AHS update on novel coronavirus](#) [↗]
- [Government of Canada's Travel Health Notices](#) [↗]
- [World Health Organization's Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) [↗]

News

- [New cases of COVID-19 confirmed in Alberta](#) (March 9, 2020)
- [Two new presumptive COVID-19 cases in Alberta](#) (March 8, 2020)
- [Second presumptive COVID-19 case reported in Alberta](#) (March 6, 2020)
- [Presumptive COVID-19 case reported in Alberta](#) (March 5, 2020)

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