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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

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pneumonia outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus a pandemic with sustained risk of further global spread.

If you have symptoms, stay at home and call Health Link 811 for instructions.

There are 19 cases in Alberta and 103 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 12 at 8:45 am*

## Current risk 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. While the worldwide risk is rising, the risk of contracting COVID-19 in Alberta is still low. The risk level will be adjusted if this changes in the coming weeks.

## 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 cases	19	103
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.

Test results	Negative	Positive
Completed tests (as of March 11)	2,600	19

## About coronavirus

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause respiratory illness in people, ranging from mild common colds to severe illnesses.

Novel coronaviruses, like COVID-19, are new strains of the virus that have not been previously identified in humans. This means people have no immunity against it and there is no specific vaccine or treatment.

If you think you've been exposed to COVID-19, stay home and call [Health Link 811](#) [\[↗\]](#) for instructions.

### COVID-19 vs. Influenza

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

- cause respiratory disease in people who get sick.
- spread by small droplets from the nose and mouth.
- are not spread through the air over long distances and times, unlike 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 spread the disease
  - controlling spread is possible when people with symptoms are isolated
- There is no specific vaccine or treatment for COVID-19.
- COVID-19 causes severe disease and mortality in more cases than the flu. On average there is about 1-2 deaths per 100 people infected with COVID-19, compared to 1 death in every 1000 people with the flu.

- 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

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

COVID-19 is not airborne and cannot spread through the air over long distances or times, like the measles.

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.

## Symptoms

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to influenza or other respiratory illnesses. Common symptoms include:

- fever
- cough
- extreme tiredness

Symptom of serious illness include:

- difficulty breathing
- pneumonia

Most people (about 80%) recover without needing special treatment. However, it can cause serious illness in some, and there is a risk of death in severe cases.

While we are still learning about how COVID-19 people who are older or have 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.

If you have symptoms, stay home and call [Health Link 811](#) [\[↗\]](#) for instructions.


## Treatment

There is no specific vaccine for COVID-19 at this time.

The virus is so new and different that it needs its own vaccine. Researchers around the world now working to develop a vaccine.

Supportive care has been used to treat patients with COVID-19 and some medications are being tested to

Supportive care has been used to treat 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 an 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.

Download: [Help Prevent the Spread poster](#) , (PDF, 933 KB)


### How to prevent the spread

The risk for Albertans is still considered low at this time, but that may change in the coming weeks. 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
- if you have symptoms, stay home and call [Health Link 811](#)  for instructions

### 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

To prepare for COVID-19, public health officials recommend the following:

- Create a household action plan. 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](#)

## How to self-isolate

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

- call [Health Link 811](#) for instructions if any symptoms begin

## Info for Albertans

If you have symptoms and recently 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 the ER.

If you need immediate medical attention, call 911 and inform them that you may have COVID-19.

### Info for travellers

#### Returning travellers

All Albertans returning from outside Canada should follow the monitoring and self-isolation steps below.

If you develop symptoms, call [Health Link 811](#) [↗](#) for instructions and testing. Do not go to the ER or doctor's office.

Travellers must monitor for symptoms

All travellers returning from outside of Canada, should follow these steps:

- monitor for symptoms such as cough or fever for 14 days
- consider limiting attendance at large public gatherings
- isolate yourself and call [Health Link 811](#) [↗](#) for 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

Travellers must self-isolate

All travellers returning from the following locations must self-isolate until 14 days have passed since that trip, even if feeling well:

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



How to self-isolate

Follow these [self-isolation guidelines](#) [↓](#):

- avoid close contact with others, especially seniors and people with chronic conditions

or compromised immune systems

- do not go to work, school, social events or any other public gatherings
- watch for symptoms like fever, cough or difficulty breathing
- call [Health Link 811](#) [↗](#) for testing if any symptoms begin

## Departing travellers

Travel outside Canada is not recommended for:

- seniors over 65
- people with chronic health conditions

The global risk is rising rapidly and it's difficult to predict which travel destinations may put you at risk. All Albertans should think carefully about their travel plans and possibility of being exposed while traveling.

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:

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 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 and employees

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 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](#) 
- [WCB COVID-19 worker fact sheet](#)  (PDF, 57 KB)
- [WCB COVID-19 employer fact sheet](#)  (PDF, 70 KB)

#### 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 [Health Link 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 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 11:

“Today, I am here to give an update on COVID-19, including an announcement that five new cases have been confirmed in our province. However, I first want to speak on the World Health Organization's decision to officially declare COVID-19 a global pandemic earlier today.

“This is an important designation, and one that reflects the seriousness of this virus. COVID-19 is not like other threats we have seen in the past few decades. It is more severe than seasonal influenza, and more contagious than viruses like SARS.

“It can be contained, as has been shown in other countries like Singapore, but it will take an effort of all of us to do so. This means we must continue preparing for the potential that our risk in Alberta will change.

“In the meantime, we will continue to identify and isolate any new cases confirmed in the province, and are ensuring that Alberta's health system is preparing for every possible scenario.

“To date, there have been 19 confirmed cases in Alberta. This includes the five new cases that we confirmed last night and earlier today. All are travel-related.

“One of these confirmed cases involves a male in the Edmonton Zone whose symptoms started on March 6. He underwent a procedure that was not related to COVID-19 at the Misericordia Hospital on March 6 and 7. He tested positive for COVID-19 on March 9 and is now self-isolating.

“Any staff or patients who were potentially exposed at this location will be directly contacted by public health. There is no risk to patients or staff at the hospital at this time.

“I want to be clear that there is no need for anyone else who may have attended the Misericordia or other hospital sites to be concerned or take additional action. Anyone considered to be at risk is being directly contacted by AHS.

“All necessary precautions will be taken to support their health. If you are not contacted by AHS, you are not at risk at this time. We are sharing this information as we are committed to being transparent with

not at risk at this time. We are sharing this information as we are committed to being transparent with Albertans, and informing them of key developments as they unfold.

"The other four cases that we have confirmed involve three cases from the Calgary Zone and one from Central Zone. They are all now recovering in isolation at home.

"These cases had recently returned from travel in a variety of countries, including Iran, Egypt, Spain, Washington State and Mexico. As I have previously mentioned, while we know where these individuals have travelled, it is too early to know the country or exact location where they actually contracted the virus.

"Today's declaration from the WHO is a sign of what we have been stressing for many days: The global situation is changing rapidly, and we all need to take steps to protect our own health and the health of those around us.

"Based on this evolving information, Alberta is now asking all travellers returning from Italy to self-isolate for 14 days have passed since their last visit. All returning travellers at Canadian airports, including those in Edmonton and Calgary, will receive screening starting on Friday and be advised of the need to self-isolate.

"In advance of this formal screening, I want to ask all Albertans who returned from Italy in the last two weeks to self-isolate at home until 14 days have passed since they were last there.

"In addition to this, all travelers returning to Alberta from anywhere outside Canada should consider limiting attendance at large public gatherings, and most importantly, should closely monitor themselves for any symptoms such as fever or cough.

"If they experience symptoms, they should immediately self-isolate if they get these symptoms, and call Health Link at 811 for assessment and testing.

"The sooner we can detect cases, the sooner we can isolate an individual and, if needed, launch a detailed investigation to find out if anyone they have been in contact with is at risk.

"We are working hard to manage wait times on Health Link. While I know it can be frustrating to wait on the phone, this is the best way to receive assessment and follow-up testing, if needed.

"We are also recommending at this time that anyone over the age of 65 and those with chronic health conditions not travel outside Canada, as the global risk is increasing rapidly and it is difficult to predict which travel destinations may put people at risk. Even Albertans who are not in these risk groups should think carefully about their travel plans, and the possibility they may be exposed to the virus while traveling.

"Another action we are taking at this time is moving forward with our plans to support family doctors with personal protective equipment.

"With the increase in global spread, and travel related cases in the province, we want to be sure that family doctors have access to personal protective equipment in a time when they are having difficulty ordering these supplies from their usual providers.

"Alberta Health Services zones will be working with primary care networks to move this forward with

Alberta Health Services zones will be working with primary care networks to move this forward, with priority given to those family doctors who are doing testing for COVID-19 in their offices.

"Right now, I know many Albertans feel overwhelmed with the amount of information available in the news, online and in social media. I want to encourage all Albertans to access reliable information about what is happening, and do their part to stop the spread of rumours and inaccurate speculation.

"COVID-19 is going to test our health system and emergency preparedness, but our system is preparing for that test. In the coming days and weeks, we will continue to implement aggressive public health measures to detect and isolate new cases.





"We will continue to update our webpage – [alberta.ca/COVID19](https://alberta.ca/COVID19) – twice daily. We will continue to hold regular updates and share information with Albertans.

"The risk of exposure to the virus is currently low in Alberta. That is a good thing, but it may change in coming weeks. If it changes, we will alert you. And we will continue doing everything possible to protect the health and well-being of everyone in our province.

"The health of Albertans is, and always will be, our top priority."

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

## Resources

- [Prevent the spread poster](#)  (PDF, 933 KB)
- [Government of Canada's 2019 New Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\): Outbreak Notification - !\[\]\(2d0771195b0e0240efcbd9d75c7cddb8\_img.jpg\) English !\[\]\(2877759bcf4a3609f6b92cbc19de8848\_img.jpg\) | Simplified Chinese !\[\]\(28f8e7c07e6223706c823723c822f20f\_img.jpg\) | French !\[\]\(d87d73a74f22e314c531cbe6e8724268\_img.jpg\)](#)
- [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 in Alberta](#) (March 11, 2020)
- [Seven new cases of COVID-19 confirmed](#) (March 10, 2020)
- [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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