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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 23 cases in Alberta and 107 confirmed cases across Canada.

- [New public health measures and travel recommendations](#)
- [Updates from Alberta's Chief Medical Officer](#)

*Last updated: March 12 at 3:30 pm*

## 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	23	107
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 12)	4,265	23

## 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)

### Public health restrictions on mass gatherings

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, Alberta has implemented new public health restrictions.

#### Events

The following mass gatherings should be cancelled:

- Events with more than 50 attendees that involves international participants, critical infrastructure staff, seniors, or other high-risk populations.
- Large events with more than 250 attendees:
  - Includes: sporting events, conferences and community events
  - Does not include: places of worship, grocery stores, airports or shopping centres

Events that do not meet this criteria can proceed, but risk mitigation measures must be in place, such as providing sanitizer stations and distancing between attendees.

#### Schools, daycares and post-secondary institutions

Schools, daycares and post-secondary institutions can remain open at this time, but steps should be taken to ensure no more than 250 people are in the same room at any given time.


### 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

## How to cope

### Mental health and coping

The COVID-19 pandemic can have a significant impact on Albertans' mental health. Resources are available if you, or someone you know, is struggling or needs a little extra support.

#### Help Line

The Mental Health Help Line is available 24/7 to provide advice and referrals to community supports near you.


- Call: [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642)

#### Online resources

For helpful advice on handling stressful situations and ways to talk to children.

- [Mental health and coping with COVID-19](#) [↗](#) (CDC)
- [Talking with children about COVID-19](#) [↗](#) (CDC)
- [Help in Tough Times](#) [↗](#) (AHS)

# 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

### Departing travellers

Travel outside Canada is not recommended at this time. Given the rapid global spread of COVID-19, it is no longer possible to assess health risks for the duration of the trip.

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

### Returning travellers


Effective March 12, all Albertans currently outside Canada should self-isolate for 14 days when they return.

If you develop symptoms – cough, fever or difficulty breathing – stay home and call [Health Link 811](#) for instructions and testing. Do not go to the ER or doctor's office.



#### 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

## 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, daycares and post-secondary institutions




At this time, schools, daycares and post-secondary institutions can remain open, but steps should be taken to ensure no more than 250 people are in the same room at any given time.

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

- If a student has travelled outside of Canada, it is recommended that they self-isolate until two weeks have passed since their return. 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 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


## Recommended precautions

Alberta public health officials recommend the following actions as a precaution:

- Effective March 12, all Albertans currently outside Canada should self-isolate for 14 days when



they return.

- If employees have visited a Italy, 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 has to self-isolate





- Employees and employers should work together to explore alternate working arrangements:
  - 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 5 days of sick time without risk of losing their job with the personal and family responsibility leave, but this time is unpaid.

## Business continuity plans


Employers should consider their business continuity plans and how COVID-19 could impact their workplace. To prepare, make plans to:

- protect employees
- limit spread in workplaces
- 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)


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 12:

“ Today, I am here to give an update on COVID-19.

"First, I want to announce that Alberta is adopting aggressive new public health measures to limit the spread of this virus.

"As I mentioned yesterday, COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving global threat. It is more severe than seasonal influenza, and more contagious than viruses like SARS.

"Other countries who have faced this crisis have proven that immediate public measures are necessary to prevent the spread of the virus and protect public health.

"The steps we take now and in the days ahead will help determine the severity of this outbreak for Alberta.

"These are extraordinary circumstances, and our public health response must rise to the challenge we face. That is why, effective immediately, the Emergency Management Cabinet Committee has approved my recommendation that all large gatherings of more than 250 people, or international events in the province are to be cancelled.

"This includes large sporting events, conferences and community events. It does not extend to places of worship, grocery stores, airports or shopping centres.

" Any event that has less than 250 attendees and expects to have international participants, or involves critical infrastructure staff, seniors, or other high-risk populations should also be cancelled.

"Events of less than 250 people that do not meet these criteria can proceed as long as risk mitigation is in place such as sanitizer stations, ensuring that there is a mechanism for keeping anyone ill from attending, and distancing between attendees.

"At this time, schools and daycares can remain open but schools are encouraged to avoid large all-school gatherings.

" In addition to these measures, I am expanding my recommendation from yesterday, and am advising Albertans to not travel outside of the country at this time. Given the rapid global spread of the virus, it is no longer possible to assess health risks for the duration of the trip.

"Also, given the quickly evolving nature of this outbreak, I am recommending that Albertans who are currently outside the country self-isolate on their return for 14 days, independent of the country they were visiting.

"Finally, I am recommending that any Albertan who is ill with influenza-like symptoms such as fever or cough stay at home for 14 days after their illness started.

"I appreciate that some Albertans may be disappointed at this news. These measures will have significant impacts on many people. This is a serious decision, which we do not make lightly. This is an extraordinary situation, which requires extraordinary measures.

"We are taking this step based on the ongoing developments outside Alberta, both in the actions being taken by other jurisdictions, as well as the increasing spread of cases around the world.

"This situation is evolving rapidly and we know Albertans will have lots of questions. We continue to update our website regularly and respond to questions as quickly as possible.

update our website regularly and respond to questions as quickly as possible.

"We may not have every answer today, but we will continue to provide regular updates.

"Here at home, we continue to work hard to identify new cases and take immediate action. With respect to new cases, four new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Alberta.

"All of these are individuals in the Calgary zone. They involve a range of ages in people who had recently returned from travelling in Jordan, Egypt, France, Germany, and the United States, specifically Florida.

"One of these cases is a young child who is now recovering at home.

"This child returned with their family from a vacation in Florida and developed mild symptoms once back home in Alberta. They attended a local daycare last week while experiencing mild symptoms. This child tested positive yesterday and is now recovering in isolation at home. They are expected to make a full recovery.

"As soon as the case tested positive, health officials took immediate action to protect the health of the child, and other Albertans. On the advice of Alberta Health Services, the daycare has temporarily closed to limit exposure to the virus.

"All close contacts who may be at risk have been contacted by AHS. Those who display symptoms are being tested and all contacts are self-isolating for 14 days while being monitored by health officials. I want to remind Albertans that anyone who has not been contacted directly by Alberta Health Services is not at risk.

"As a mother myself, I know that a child contracting COVID-19 may be upsetting for some people. Children are a vulnerable group and when they get sick, it can often hit very close to home.

"I want to assure all parents that cases of COVID-19 in children are typically mild. Despite that, we need to take the same measures for children that we take for any other case – isolate the person who is ill, find close contacts, and ask them to stay at home for 14 days while monitoring their symptoms.

"In addition to the measures announced today, I continue to strongly urge all Albertans to follow the public health advice that we have been providing:

" Do not visit long-term care facilities or loved ones in hospital if you are sick with a fever or cough.

"All Albertans should practice good hygiene, including washing their hands regularly and avoiding touching their face and eyes.

"Develop a plan for what might need to change if you and your loved ones need to stay home for two weeks. Talk with your neighbours and friends to see how you can support each other if any of you are in this situation.

"There is another important part of preparing: talking to your children. All parents and guardians should to talk to their children about this virus, if they haven't already done so.

"As a mother, I know these conversations can seem daunting to many parents. It is important to remember that children look to adults for guidance during new or stressful events. If you do not provide

them with accurate information, they will still pick things up at school, on the playground, from television and online.

"It is important that all parents talk to their children in a factual, age-appropriate way. Let them know that worrying is a normal and healthy response. Be honest and accurate. Evidence to date suggests that the vast majority of kids who contract COVID-19 experience mild symptoms.

"Most importantly, parents should make their children feel safe and educate them on everyday actions they can take that will help them reduce the spread of germs. We are developing materials to help parents with these conversations. There are also good resources available now from the BC Centre for Disease Control, CDC and others.

"Any public health emergency can have a significant impact on the mental health of children and adults alike. I want to remind all Albertans of the importance of supporting their mental health, and the health of those around them.

"The COVID-19 pandemic will take many weeks and months to unfold.

"It's important that all Albertans know that mental health supports are available if needed.

"Anyone struggling with their mental health can reach out to the Mental Health Help Line which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Help is also available across Alberta through your local health services.

"Children and teens can also call or text the Kids Help Phone at any time of day or night. This is a free, confidential and professional service designed to meet our young peoples' needs.

"Many, many health professionals and other Albertans are working very hard, often around the clock, to limit the spread of COVID-19.







"Given the global spread, and our ongoing work to aggressively identify and isolate cases of COVID-19, I expect that we will continue to confirm new cases in the days ahead.



"Rest assured that Alberta continues to work closely with our health partners to closely monitor developments around the world. If we need to implement additional public health measures, we will do so.

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

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

## Resources

- [Help Prevent the Spread Poster](#)  (PDF, 933 KB)
- [Government of Canada's 2019 New Coronavirus \(2019-nCoV\): Outbreak Notification](#) -  [English](#)  | [Simplified Chinese](#)  | [French](#) 
- [AHS update on novel coronavirus](#) 

- [Government of Canada's Travel Health Notices](#) 
- [World Health Organization's Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) 

## News

- [Update on COVID-19 in Alberta](#) (March 12, 2020)
- [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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