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Popular topics:

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

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## Current situation

The COVID-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO)

Confirmed cases: 29 in Alberta, 158 in Canada.

- [Check your symptoms with the COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#)
- [New public health measures and travel recommendations](#)
- [Updates from the Chief Medical Officer updates](#)

*Last updated: March 13 at 7:00 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. 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	29	158
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 low.

Test results	Negative	Positive
Completed tests (as of March 13)	5,429	29

## 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 it has 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
- 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 spreading the disease.
  - Controlling its 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, COVID-19 has resulted in 1 to 2 deaths per 100 cases, compared to 1 death in every 1000 flu cases.
- Because COVID-19 can cause serious illness, it is critical to keep it from spreading by having people with a symptoms stay home, 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 survives for a few hours on a surface, though it may be possible for it to survive several days under ideal conditions.

## Symptoms

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to influenza and 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 COVID-19, people who are older or have pre-existing 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 new and different, so needs its own vaccine – which researchers around the world are now working to develop.

Supportive care is being used to treat patients with COVID-19 and some medications are being tested to see if they can help severely ill patients.

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

- concerned about your health
- 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.

- [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
  - 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.

See Alberta's complete [recommendations for mass gatherings](#)  (PDF, 23 KB).

## How to prevent the spread

The risk for Albertans remains 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.

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

### Prevent the spread

All Albertans are encouraged to take personal steps to help prevent the spread.

To protect yourself and others:

- stay home and away from others if sick or in isolation
- wash hands often

- cover coughs and sneezes
- avoid touching face with unwashed hands
- avoid travel outside Canada
- [self-isolate](#) ↓ for 14 days if returning from travel outside Canada or were exposed to COVID-19

If you have symptoms, like a dry cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing:

- stay home - do not go to an ER or clinic
- check symptoms using the [COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) [↗]
- call Health Link 811 for instructions and testing

## Wearing medical masks

Masks can be very important in certain situations.

- If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended as they do not provide full protection and can create a false sense of security.
- If you are sick, wearing a mask helps prevent spreading the illness to other people.

This is why people who have a cough or respiratory symptoms must wear masks and wash their hands when visiting an emergency department or clinic.

## Resources

- [Infection prevention and control precautions for health-care settings](#) ↓
- [Help Prevent the Spread posters](#)

### How to prepare

To prepare for COVID-19, public health officials recommend that you:

- Create a household action plan:
  - 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 at greater risk of serious complications, such as 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 you can contact if you need access to information, health care services, support or resources.
  - Create an emergency contact list.
- Practice good personal health habits and plan for home-based actions:

- Practice everyday preventive actions.
- Choose a room in your home you can use to separate sick household members from healthy ones. Choose a separate bathroom for sick individuals 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 closed.
- Plan for potential changes at your workplace.
  - Learn about your employer's emergency operations plan.
  - Ask about what sick-leave policies and work from home options are available.
- Do not stockpile goods at this time. While it's always best to have 3 days worth of supplies on hand, we are not recommending Albertans purchase food or other materials in bulk.
- Learn how to [build an emergency kit](#).

## How to self-isolate

If you need to self-isolate, follow these 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

See the [self-isolation information sheet](#)  (PDF, 120 KB) for more information.

## 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 an ER or clinic.

If you need immediate medical attention, call 911 and inform them 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

##### Returned before March 12

- Travellers returning from Italy, Iran, China's Hubei province and the Grand Princess cruise ship should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms
- Travellers returning from other countries outside Canada should monitor for symptoms for 14 days
- If symptoms develop (cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing), stay home and call Health Link 811 for testing

##### Returning after March 12

- All travellers returning from outside Canada should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms
- If symptoms develop (cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing), stay home and call Health Link 811 for testing

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.

#### Travel restriction exemptions

Certain professions may be exempt from travel restrictions.

At this time, the following professions have received travel restriction exemptions:


- Flight Attendants
- Pilots

The chief medical officer of health is assessing exemptions on a case-by-case basis based on measures these industries are already taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



#### 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

To prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, among seniors and other vulnerable groups:

- Do not visit loved ones in hospitals, long-term care or other supported living facilities if you are sick.
  - People in these locations are at the highest risk of complications from influenza, COVID-19, and other respiratory viruses.
  - Anyone feeling well and not showing symptoms can continue to visit loved ones in these locations.
- All health-care workers returning from travel should be assessed by Occupational Health Services or AHS Public Health before returning to work after self-isolating for 2 weeks, even if they don't have symptoms.

#### Info for schools and daycares

### Schools and daycares can remain open at this time

The World Health Organization does not recommend school closures as the only way to prevent spread in young children. Given the current situation in Alberta, schools would need to be closed for months, not weeks, to be effective.

Instead, steps should be taken to protect the health of students and staff:

- eliminate large congregations of students
- ensure no more than 250 people are in the same room at any given time



- ensure no more than 250 people are in the same room at any given time
- cancel sports or other extracurricular activities that involve physical contact
- [follow guidelines for schools and child care programs](#) ↓ (PDF, 918 KB)

## Self-isolation in students or staff

[Self-isolation](#) ↓ does not mean the person is infected with COVID-19. If testing confirms a case, public health officials will immediately contact any close contacts believed to be a risk.

- If a student or teacher has been identified as a close contact, it is not recommended to keep other students at home. Health officials will ensure all appropriate precautions are taken.
- Students who are not identified as needing to self-isolate, do not need to stay home from school and do not meet the testing criteria for COVID-19. Therefore, requesting a doctor's note is not appropriate.

## Resources

- [Alberta's guidance for schools and child care programs](#) ↓ (PDF, 918 KB)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada's guidance for schools](#) ↗
- [Alberta Health memo to school superintendents](#) ↓ - March 3, 2020 (PDF, 48 KB)
- [Alberta Health memo to parents](#) ↓ - March 3, 2020 (PDF, 51 KB)

### Info for post-secondary institutions

Post-secondary institutions have not been advised to close at this time.

All Albertans are encourage to take personal steps to protect yourself and help prevent the spread:

- stay home if sick
- wash hands often
- cover coughs and sneezes
- avoid touching face with unwashed hands
- follow recommendations to avoid travel outside Canada
- self-isolate for 14 days if returning from travel outside Canada

### Info for employers and employees

## Employment rules changes

We're acting quickly to protect Albertans by implementing paid, job-protected leave. Details of how these changes will take effect will be provided in the coming days.

Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow employees to take 14 days of paid, job-protected

Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow employees to take 14 days of paid, job-protected leave if they are:

- required to self-isolate
- sick or caring for a loved one with COVID-19

To be eligible, employees:

- will not be required to have a medical note
- do not need to have worked for an employer for 90 days






This leave covers the self-isolation period recommended by Alberta's chief medical officer. We recognize this could put pressure on employers, and are working towards a solution to address these challenges.

## 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
- explore alternate working arrangements, such as:
  - working from home or remotely
  - doing work that doesn't require contact with other people

## Resources


- [OHS: Respiratory viruses and the workplace](#) 
- [Employment standards rules](#)
- [Business continuity planning](#)  (PDF, 319 KB)
- [WCB: COVID-19 worker fact sheet](#)  (PDF, 57 KB)
- [WCB: COVID-19 employer fact sheet](#)  (PDF, 70 KB)
- [POSTERS: Help Prevent the Spread](#) 

### Info for municipalities

We are providing advice based on current evidence and guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

- Learn more about the federal government's [public health recommendations for communities](#) 

## Helping local organizations plan for an outbreak


- [Business continuity planning](#)  is essential in preparing critical operations for potential

interruptions.



- [Alberta Emergency Management Agency](#) field officers are available to support municipalities, First Nations and Metis Settlements with their emergency management and business continuity planning.

## Supporting the health system

Communities should:

- refer anyone with health-related concerns to [Health Link 811](#)  and promote it as a reliable source of information
- promote the [Respiratory Viruses and the Workplace guide for workplaces](#)
- review business continuity plans to ensure disruptions from staff shortages have been considered, especially for critical operations
- stay informed about the current situation in Alberta via this web page

## Resources

- [OHS: Respiratory viruses and the workplace](#)
- [Business continuity planning](#) 
- [Help Prevent the Spread posters](#) 

## Actions being taken

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

See more [information for Albertans](#).

## Chief Medical Officer updates

Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw issued the following statement for Albertans on March 13:

“As Premier identified, there were six new cases of COVID-19 identified in the last 24 hours.

"Bringing the total to 29 cases in the province. All cases have been travel-related or in close contact with a returning traveler.

"One patient continues to recover in hospital and is in stable condition, while all others are in isolation at home.

"We continue to take aggressive public health measures to limit the spread in Alberta.

"However, I expect new cases will continue to be identified in the coming days.

"Yesterday, we announced additional measures to limit the spread of this virus.

"We recommended restrictions on large gatherings of 250 individuals or more including conferences, sporting events and community events.

"We want to reiterate this information today and we thank event organizers who reached out for further clarification on what this means for their organizations.

"Many public gathering places will remain accessible, and I encourage these places to consider enhancing their hygiene and risk mitigation practices including sanitizer stations, ensuring that there is a mechanism for keeping anyone ill from attending, and distancing between attendees.

"Additionally, we announced that travel outside Canada is not recommended at this time. Given the rapid global spread of COVID-19.

"Cases have been reported in four new countries in the last 24 hours.

"I also announced that all travellers returning from outside of Canada since March 12 should self-isolate

for 14-days and monitor symptoms.

"Certain professions may be exempt from travel restrictions. I am assessing exemptions on a case by case basis based on discussion with those industries and a strong understanding of the measures these industries are already taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"At this time, I have exempted flight attendants and pilots from this recommendation.

"At this time, self-isolation does not extend to family members. However family members must practice good hygiene and take precautions to reduce potential exposure.

"We have not taken these steps lightly.

"I know that asking Albertans to cancel mass gathering or international travel plans has a profound impact on the lives of many Albertans.

"While Alberta's cases have all been travel-related, there has been significant spread of COVID-19 in other jurisdictions in conferences, nursing homes and other places.

"The measures we are taking will help protect Albertans, especially those who are most likely to have severe disease.

"I now want to talk about schools. I know that many parents and teachers are worried about the risk of COVID in schools. We have seen other provinces and countries close schools as a preventive measure. What is important to know is that school closures are not universally agreed on as an effective intervention to prevent spread. In some other provinces that have chosen to close schools, they have not taken the other aggressive measures we announced yesterday.

"It should be noted that the World Health Organization does not recommend school closure as the only way to prevent spread in the age group of young children. Instead, they also offer a safe schools checklist which describes the ways that school environments can be kept as safe as possible for students, teachers and staff.

"Given the current situation in Alberta, the fact that any school closure would need to be in place for months, not weeks to be effective, and the fact that students may still be at risk of spreading infection in other settings besides schools, I have advised that school closures not be implemented at this time.

"To be clear, schools, daycares and post-secondary institutions can remain open.

"But steps should be taken to ensure that no more than 250 individuals are in the same room at any given time. This includes limiting whole school activities, and canceling sporting events or after school activities where necessary.

"Tomorrow, I will be talking to school authorities to walk them through guidance documents and provide information directly to answer their questions.

"We are not requiring post-secondary institutions to close at this time, however we are working with these institutions to explore other alternatives, such as offering large classes online or remotely if possible.

"We are actively monitoring the situation and will continue to keep Albertans fully informed of any developments in the days ahead.

"The best thing we can do to stop the spread of COVID-19 is practice good hygiene

"Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.

"Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

"Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or with your elbow.

"And, if you are feeling ill, stay at home.

"By slowing the spread of the virus we can reduce the number of cases that are active at any given time, which in turn gives doctors, hospitals, police, schools and vaccine-manufacturers time to prepare and respond, without becoming overwhelmed.

"The spread of COVID-19 is evolving daily, and we cannot predict what the outbreak will look like next week, or the week after.

"What I can say that we will continue to closely monitor the evidence emerging in Alberta and around the world, and take the steps needed to protect public health.

"As I have often said, we are all in this together, and the coming weeks are vital in our fight to protect Alberta from COVID-19.

"We are calling on every Albertan and organization to assist our public health efforts and do their very best to comply with the public health guidance.

"I know many Albertans are on information overload.

"We are updating our website – [alberta.ca/COVID19](https://alberta.ca/COVID19) – twice daily with all the up-to-date information.

"Things are changing rapidly, and we may not have every answer today, but we will continue to provide regular updates."

[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 13, 2020)
- [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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