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COVID-19 coronavirus info for Albertans

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

[Employment standards](#)[New and proposed legislation](#)

Current situation

The COVID-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO).
Confirmed cases: 56 in Alberta, 249 in Canada.

Effective immediately:

- Student attendance at K to 12 schools is prohibited and in-person post-secondary classes are cancelled.
- All licensed child care facilities, out-of-school care programs and preschool programs are closed indefinitely.
- New info for airline passengers, travellers, and employers
- [Complete information for Albertans](#)
- [Updates from the Chief Medical Officer](#)

Last updated: March 15 at 5:00pm



If you recently returned from travel outside Canada or have symptoms - cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing:

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

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 global 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 in Alberta and Canada

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

Location	In Alberta	In Canada
Confirmed cases	56	304
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 15)	7,069	56

About coronavirus

COVID-19 vs. Influenza

Coronaviruses

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.

COVID-19 vs. Flu

In some ways, COVID-19 is similar to influenza (also known as the flu), but there are also key differences.

Similarities

- Both cause respiratory disease

- Both cause respiratory disease
- Both are spread by small droplets from the nose and mouth
- Both are not spread through the air over long distances and times, unlike the measles

Differences

- COVID-19 does not appear to transmit as efficiently as influenza:
 - only people 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
 - Flu results in 1 death in every 1,000 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.

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

Symptoms



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

- dry cough
- fever
- fatigue/extreme tiredness

Symptom of serious illness include:

- difficulty breathing
- pneumonia

If you have symptoms:

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

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

Risks

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, serious illness appears to develop more often in people who are older or have pre-existing conditions, such as:


- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- lung disease
- cancer
- diabetes

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

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 posters](#) 

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

Monitor your symptoms

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

- stay home - do not go to an ER or clinic
- take the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) ↗
- 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](#)
-

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 neighbours 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.

Plan for self-isolation

- Practice good personal health habits and 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.
- Have 72 hours worth of food and supplies at home. We do not recommend stockpiling goods.

Plan for changes at work or school

- 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.

Resources

- [Self-isolation information sheet](#) ↓
- [How to build an emergency kit](#)



What to do

If you need to self-isolate, follow these guidelines:

- stay home - do not attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings
- avoid close contact with other people - especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems
- watch for symptoms in yourself or a family member

Monitor your symptoms

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

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

Resource

- [Self-isolation information sheet](#)  (PDF, 120 KB)

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)

Mass gathering restrictions

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: places of worship, sporting events, conferences
 - Does not include: grocery stores, airports, shopping centres, libraries and casinos

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

Resource

- [Complete recommendations for mass gatherings](#) ↓, (PDF, 32 KB)

Public health actions

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](#).

Info for Albertans

Effective March 12, all travellers returning from outside Canada must self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

Info for airline passengers

Flight information

Flight information

As more flights confirm passengers with COVID-19, Albertans should monitor their air travel.

Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats will be [posted online as information is confirmed](#) ↓. Passengers in affected seats are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure.

- Passengers in affected seats should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms

What to do

If you recently returned from outside Canada:

1. [check the list of affected flights for updates](#) ↓ (last updated March 15, 5pm)
2. [self-isolate](#) ↓ for 14 days if your seat was affected
3. [monitor for symptoms](#) ↗ such as cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing
4. [call Health Link 811](#) ↗ if symptoms develop to arrange testing

Travel outside Canada is not recommended at this time. All Albertans returning from outside Canada after March 12 should self-isolate for 14 days after arrival in Canada and monitor for symptoms.

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 travel bulletins](#)

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

Returning after March 12

- All travellers returning from outside Canada should [self-isolate](#) ↓ for 14 days and monitor for symptoms

If you develop symptoms – cough, fever or difficulty breathing – stay home and complete the [online COVID-19 self-assessment](#) ↗. Do not go to the ER or doctor's office.

Travel restriction exemptions

Exemptions will be assessed on a case-by-case basis based on measures industries are already taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

At this time, the following professions have received exemptions:

- Flight Attendants
- Pilots

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

Effective immediately, student attendance at schools is prohibited.

School authorities are expected to continue their regular day-to-day operations and ensure the safety of school facilities. Maintenance, capital projects, cleaning of facilities and administrative work will continue.

Every K-12 student will receive a final mark and students will progress to their next grade level next year. Provincial assessments, such as provincial achievement tests, will be cancelled. At this time, diploma exams essential for post-secondary acceptance will continue. Every student who is eligible to graduate from Grade 12 this year will graduate.

Teachers and other school staff will still be expected to work, either from home or at their workplace, to ensure these expectations are met. Decisions on how to do this are still to be made, and it may vary depending on the school jurisdiction.

Daycares

All licensed child care, out-of-school care programs and preschool programs in Alberta are closed at this time. as well. Approved day homes are exempt because they care for fewer than seven children at a time.

These programs are encouraged to use enhanced sanitation practices.

Info for post-secondary institutions

Effective immediately, in-person classes at post-secondary institutions are cancelled until further notice. Campuses remain open.

The government will also be working with post-secondary institutions to ensure that these extraordinary circumstances do not prevent students from being eligible for admission to post-secondary studies for the upcoming school year.

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 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 [public health recommendations](#)  from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

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](#) 

Chief Medical Officer updates

Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw issued the following statement for Albertans on March 14:

“ Today, I am here to give an update on COVID-19, and announce that 10 new cases have been confirmed, bringing the total number of cases in the province to 39.

"Six of the new cases are in Calgary Zone and four are in Edmonton Zone.

"Two of the new cases, one in Edmonton Zone and the other in Calgary Zone, have been admitted into intensive care. All other new cases are self-isolating at home and expected to make a full recovery.

"Eight of the cases have been confirmed to be related to international travel or previous confirmed cases. Travel histories include a dental conference in Vancouver, Las Vegas, Switzerland, Germany, Spain and Pakistan. Investigations are ongoing on the remaining two cases.

"I know many Albertans may be alarmed at the increasing number of cases in Alberta. As I've said before, we need to get used to a new normal.

"The reality is that we can expect cases of COVID-19 to continue in Alberta, and around Canada, for months.

"We have taken aggressive measures to limit the acceleration of spread, but we will not be able to completely stop it.

"I want to emphasize that we cannot be complacent. We must be vigilant.

"And we must look out for each other by practicing good hygiene and employing other preventative measures, such as social distancing where appropriate.

"We will continue to closely monitor the situation, and take additional steps as necessary. When it comes to protecting the health of Albertans, we will continue to consider all options.

"If we are to be successful in preventing the spread, we will also need your help.

"First, I want to emphasize the importance of following all public health guidance for travel.

"Travel outside of Canada is not recommended at this time. We also ask that any travellers returning from outside of Canada after March 12 to self-isolate for 14 days after their arrival in Canada.

"Monitor for symptoms, and should they occur, please complete the online self-assessment tool on the AHS website.

"I would like to return to my comments yesterday about schools, and the decision to keep schools remain open at this time.

"I understand that parents are concerned about their children going to school.

"And, they, along with teachers and school administrators and boards have questions and concerns.

"I cannot emphasize enough the time and discussion that continues about this decision.

"If we do make the decision to close schools, we will be considering long-term closure.

"This pandemic will not end in a matter of weeks, and there won't be a clear opportunity to re-open schools, likely until September at the earliest.

"I appreciate that each province is considering its own approach to school closures and this varies considerably.

"A few provinces have determined to close schools at this time.

"However, we have also seen other jurisdictions, such as Singapore, be successful in preventing the spread of COVID-19—without having to close schools.

"I am carefully monitoring Alberta's situation on a minute-by-minute basis.

"I am prepared to consider all options including directing the closure of an individual school, a group of schools, a school division, or all in the province if the situation warrants it.

"In the meantime, we will continue to work with schools, who remain a critical front-line partner in helping limit the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses in educating our children on the importance of good hygiene practices.

"Earlier today, I had a productive meeting with representatives from Alberta's school boards, school authorities, and education stakeholders to explore ways we can equip them to adjust operations in response to COVID-19.

"We have shared a new guideline to help schools and childcare centres to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This guideline is also available online. I have already taken feedback from my meeting this morning, and Alberta Health is revising the guideline to address what we heard.

"Additionally, starting today, we will be posting the flight information for any flight, or portion of a flight where passengers may have been exposed to COVID-19. We are focusing our public health follow up on local confirmed cases and contacts, and will not be directly contacting Albertans who were on these

flights. We are asking for Albertans to help us by checking this information.

"Online flight information includes the flight number, date and any seats that might be at risk of exposure to COVID-19.

"At-risk passengers are encouraged to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms for 14 days after arrival in Canada. Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms as a precaution.

"Given the rapid spread of COVID-19, we are seeing more and more flights with passengers confirmed to have the virus. If you have recently returned to Alberta by air, I strongly encourage you to visit the Alberta government website and self-isolate if you are found to be at risk of exposure.

"Before I conclude, I would like to mention a change in my daily reporting.

"Given the number of cases daily, we will be reporting more aggregated data online going forward.

"We will continue to notify you if there are exceptional circumstances, such as if a case involves a high-risk individual.

"This change will help our surveillance and testing teams to focus their efforts where it matters.

"Finally, I would like to thank Albertans for their uptake of the self-assessment tool we announced yesterday.

"In the span of 24 hours, we have seen well over 300,000 Albertans complete self-assessments.

"By using the self-assessment tool you have helped to ease the pressure on Health Link 811 phone lines.

"Thank you to everyone for doing their part—big or small—to help us keep Albertans safe and healthy.

"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 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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