Alberta

COVID-19 info for Albertans

Actions to protect Albertans and prevent the spread of novel coronavirus.

⊙ ## Current situation

The COVID-19 outbreak was declared a global pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO). Alberta will be declaring a state of emergency under the *Public Health Act* on March 17.

Confirmed cases: 97 in Alberta, 447 in Canada.

- Complete information for Albertans
- Updates from the Chief Medical Officer

Last updated: March 17 at 4 pm

ⓘ 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

What's new

Alberta will be declaring a state of emergency under the *Public Health Act*.

New public health measures are now recommended to limit the time Albertans spend in large crowds and crowed spaces. Effective today:

- all events over 50 people to be cancelled
- no attendance at rec centres, casinos, bingo halls, bars, theatres and other facilities

- sit-down restaurants can remain open at lower capacity

Current risk in Alberta

On March 17, 23 new cases were confirmed in Alberta.

We're continuing to move forward with more aggressive measures to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Alberta.

In the coming days, additional actions may be required. The health of Albertans is, and always will be, our top priority.

Cases in Alberta and Canada

Location	Confirmed cases	Deaths
In Canada	447	7
In Alberta	97	0
Calgary zone	70	0
Edmonton zone	20	0
Central zone	3	0
South zone	1	0
North zone	3	0

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 17)	12,258	97

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 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 ⬈ to determine next steps and find out if you require 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

Last updated: March 16 at 5 pm

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.

If you suspect you might have COVID-19, complete an online COVID-19 self-assessment to determine next steps and find out if testing is required.

For other health-related concerns, consult your health care provider.

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](#) ↗

NEW: Mass gathering restrictions

Last updated: March 17 at 4 pm

New public health measures are now recommended to limit the time Albertans spend in large crowds and crowed spaces. Effective today:

- Mass gatherings are now limited to no more than 50 attendees.
  - This includes: conferences, worship gatherings and family events such as weddings and funerals.
  - This does not include: grocery stores, shopping centres, health care facilities, airports, the legislature and other essential services.
- Albertans are prohibited from attending public recreation facilities and private entertainment facilities.
  - This includes gyms, swimming pools, arenas, science centres, museums, art galleries, libraries, community centres, children's play centres, casinos, racing entertainment centres and bingo halls.
- Albertans are prohibited from attending bars and nightclubs, where minors are prohibited by law.

- Sit-down restaurants, cafes, coffee shops, food courts and other food-serving facilities, including those with minors-allowed liquor license, are limited to 50% capacity to a maximum of 50 people.
    - Take-out, delivery or drive-through service is permitted.
    - [Licensed facilities are permitted to deliver liquor](#) ⤓ (PDF, 112 KB)

At this time, not-for-profit community kitchens, soup kitchens and religious kitchens are exempt, but sanitization practices are expected to be in place and support will be in place for this practice.

How to prevent the spread

Last updated: March 16 at 5 pm

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, using soap and water for at least twenty seconds
- 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](#)

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 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

- 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](#)

How to self-isolate

What to do

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

- stay home - do not attend work, 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](#) ↗ to determine next steps and find out if testing is required

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](#)

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)

What Alberta is doing

Alberta government actions

- March 17 – Alberta declared a state of emergency under the *Public Health Act* to empower authorities to more effectively respond to public health concerns.
- March 17 – $60 million in one-time emergency funding was provided to civil society organizations, adult homeless shelters, and women's emergency shelters to:
  - enable social distancing and sanitization of common areas
  - provide supports and services to at-risk seniors, people with disabilities and families facing homelessness, poverty and social isolation
- March 15 – $500 million in additional health funding was commitment to the COVID-19 response to ensure front-line health professionals have the tools they need for testing, surveillance and treatment of patients.

Public health actions

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

On March 15, we committed an additional $500 million to the COVID-19 response. The new funding will ensure front-line health professionals have the tools they need for testing, surveillance and treatment of patients as the province works to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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

As more flights confirm passengers with COVID-19, Albertans should monitor their air travel even if it was limited to within Canada.

Note: all travellers returning from outside of Canada after March 12 are asked to self-isolate for 14 days, regardless of whether they were on a flight with a known COVID-19 case.

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 a flight:

1. [check the list of affected flights for updates](#) ⤓ (last updated March 17, 6:20 pm)

2. [self-isolate](#) ⤓ for 14 days if your seat was affected

3. [monitor for symptoms](#) ↗ such as cough, fever, fatigue or difficulty breathing

4. take the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to determine next steps and find out if testing is required.

Info for travellers

Departing travellers

Travel outside Canada is not recommended for Albertans 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

- Comercial carriers

Info for seniors

Last updated: March 15 at 5 pm

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

- Only essential visits to any continuing care or long-term care facility in Alberta are recommended.

- Individuals over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing health conditions are most at risk of severe symptoms from COVID-19.

- Families and friends of those in these facilities are asked to think of other ways besides visiting that they can support and encourage their loved ones through this difficult time.

Info for schools and daycares

Last updated: March 17 at 4 pm

Effective immediately, all students will no longer be attending classes in K to 12 schools until further notice.

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

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 student will receive a final mark and students will progress to their next grade level next school 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.

All licensed childcare facilities, out-of-school programs and preschool programs in Alberta are closed at this time.

- Approved day homes are exempt as they care for fewer than 7 children at a time, but should use enhanced sanitation practices.

Should students/parents/guardians wish to access a school facility, they must follow these guidelines:

- Anyone sick with respiratory symptoms (even if symptoms resemble a very mild cold) should not be allowed to enter.

   - Staff should be actively asking those who enter if they are having any respiratory symptoms, which would include (but not limited to) fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose etc.

- Handwashing must take place when entering and exiting the school. This may be done by either using soap and water (for a minimum of 20 seconds) or by using alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Less than 50 people should occupy a single space (e.g. classroom, hallway, and gymnasium) at a single time.

- The principles of social distancing should apply. A minimum distance of two meters must be maintained between individuals.

Resources:

- [Record of decision by the chief medical officer of health](#) ⤓ (PDF, 110 KB)

Info for post-secondary institutions

Last updated: March 15 at 5 pm

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.

Last updated: March 17 at 12:30 pm

Employment rules changes

We are taking action to protect Albertans by implementing job-protected leave.

Changes to the Employment Standards Code will allow full and part-time employees to take 14 days of job-protected leave if they are:

- required to self-isolate

- caring for a child or dependent adult that is required to self-isolate

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. This leave may be extended if the advice of the chief medical officer changes.

The leave does not apply to self-employed individuals or contractors.

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)

- WCB: COVID-19 employer fact sheet [↗] (PDF, 76 KB)
  - [POSTERS: Help Prevent the Spread] [↗]

Info for municipalities

Last updated: March 15 at 5 pm

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] [↗]

Info for shelters

In collaboration with Alberta Community and Social Services, a [guidance document] ⬇ (PDF, 647 KB) has been developed to support providers of services for Albertans experiencing (or at-risk of) homelessness. The document outlines general recommendations to prevent COVID-19 in these settings.

Chief Medical Officer updates

Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Deena Hinshaw issued the following statement for Albertans on March 17. Read the transcript.

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 4: COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta (March 17 at 3:30 p.m.)

- [New measures to limit COVID-19 in Alberta](#) (March 17, 2020)

- [Update 3: COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta](#) (March 16 at 5 p.m.)

- [Update 2: COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta](#) (March 15 at 4:30 p.m.)

- [$500 million committed to COVID-19 response](#) (March 15, 2020)

- [Update on COVID-19 in Alberta](#) (March 14, 2020)

- [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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