

## Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Public health officials are working closely with colleagues across the country, and partners here in Nova Scotia, to prepare and respond to the increased likelihood of more COVID-19 infections in Canada.

In December 2019, cases of pneumonia were reported in Wuhan, China caused by a new virus that hadn't been seen in humans. The illness is known as "COVID-19". The first cases in Canada were reported in late-January 2020. As the virus continues to spread globally, there is an increased likelihood we will see cases in Nova Scotia.

 There have been no confirmed cases of the virus in Nova Scotia at this time. The public will be informed if a case is confirmed.

The situation with COVID-19 is rapidly evolving and it is important for Nova Scotians to keep up to date, using credible sources of information.

### How Nova Scotia is preparing

Nova Scotia's health care system is actively monitoring and detecting potential cases of novel coronavirus. This work includes:

- establishing a patient screening process for use by all front-line health care workers
- monitoring hospitals for potential cases
- applying effective public health and infection control measures communicating directly with community organizations and universities
- sharing accurate, up-to-date information with our partners and Nova Scotians

### Advice for Nova Scotians

There are currently no vaccines available to protect you against the novel coronavirus. Nova Scotians are encouraged to think about the actions they can take to stay healthy and prevent the spread of any respiratory illness, including COVID-19.

To help protect older Nova Scotians and those most at risk for severe illness, the province is restricting visitors who have travelled outside the country in the last 14 days from entering long term care homes. As always, anyone who is feeling unwell should not enter a facility.

There are [simple, practical things you can do to prepare](#) in case you or someone in your household becomes ill or if COVID-19 becomes common in your community.

## Practice good hand hygiene

Wash or sanitize hands often, particularly:

- before and after preparing or eating food
- after touching pets
- after handling waste, dirty laundry or bathroom use
- whenever hands look dirty
- after shaking hands

Washing with soap and water is preferred – rubbing hands together removes visible dirt and germs. Use disposable paper towels (preferred) for drying hands or a reusable towel that is laundered often.

If soap and water are not available (and your hands are not visibly dirty), use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Use enough to cover the fronts and backs of both hands, between all fingers and rub hands together until they feel dry.

## Use cough/sneeze etiquette

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Dispose used tissues in the garbage and wash your hands, or use an alcohol-based hand rub immediately after OR
- Cough/sneeze into your elbow, not your hand

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

## Clean high-touch surfaces and objects often (at a minimum of daily or as needed)

Viruses can live on surfaces for several days. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects can reduce germs and prevent infection.

- Clean and disinfect items like doorknobs, light switches, railings, toilets and tabletops daily – wash using soapy water, then disinfect using household cleaning products (follow the directions on the label) or a solution of 1-part bleach to 9-parts water.
- Disinfect phones, remote controls, computers and other handheld devices with 70% alcohol or wipes.
- Wash or launder clothing, sheets and towels on a regular basis.
- Dispose of garbage on a regular basis. Wash hands after.

## Make a plan

Being prepared is good advice any time.

- All Nova Scotians should have an emergency kit and basic supplies that you/your family may need for up to 72 hours. No panic-buying or stockpiling.
- Ensure prescriptions are filled.
- Think about what you will do if you or member of your family becomes sick and needs care.
- Talk to your employer about working from home if you need to self-isolate or care for a family member who is ill.
- Communicate with family and friends. Let them know you're making a plan. Share yours with them. Check in on each other and run essential errand should one of you become ill.

- If you become ill, stay home until you are no longer showing symptoms.

## Travel planning

Anyone who travels outside Canada may come in contact with the novel coronavirus. Travellers are reminded to follow health precautions like washing their hands often, avoiding contact with persons who are sick, and practicing proper cough and sneeze etiquette.

If you or a family member have plans to travel outside Canada, please consider if:

- a [travel health notice](#) has been issued by the Government of Canada for the country or region you plan to visit
- you or a family member have a compromised immune system
- you have, or can get, appropriate travel insurance should you become sick while away

The Public Health Agency of Canada is recommending that [Canadians avoid all cruise ship travel](#) due to COVID-19 because the virus can spread quickly on ships due to the close contact between passengers.

Anyone who has travelled internationally should closely monitor their health for 14 days after returning to Canada.

## For employers and community groups

The advice above not only applies to families and homes, but also workplaces and community facilities. Employers are encouraged to think about the actions they can take to help staff stay healthy and help their operations prevent spread of any respiratory illness, including COVID-19.

Other advice for businesses and community groups includes:

- Make sure you have a business continuity or emergency plan in place.
- Think about what you will do if a number of your employees become sick.
- Support employees who may become ill. Talk to your staff about flexible hours or alternative work options should they need to stay at home for an extended period.
- Support proper infection prevention and control measures in your business. Post handwashing signs and provide alcohol-based hand rub to encourage frequent hand hygiene and ensure space/surface cleaning is completed.
- Avoid requesting doctors' notes from employees who become sick or self-isolate.
- Remove non-essential items like magazines, stuffed toys, and other items that cannot be easily cleaned from reception areas.

## Mental well-being

A new virus like COVID-19 can create fear and anxiety. The best ways to address concerns and support each other include:

- listen and provide reassurance – it's normal to have questions
- get information from reliable sources
- address questions and correct misinformation
- monitor for discrimination/bullying related to COVID-19
- maintain normal routines and programming as much as possible

For help with mental health concerns, call 811 or the Mental Health Crisis Line toll-free at 1-888-429-8167.

## Symptoms

Symptoms of novel coronavirus include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia. Similar to other viruses, novel coronavirus can spread between people; the severity can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, infection can lead to death. Current information suggests most people do not experience severe illness or require hospitalization.

## When to seek help

Anyone who has travelled outside Canada may have come in contact with the novel coronavirus and should closely monitor their health for 14 days after returning to the country.

Travellers who start to feel unwell, should stay at home/self-isolate away from the public. Individuals who develop fever, with a temperature 38°C or higher, and/or cough should call 811 for assessment.

Nova Scotia Health Authority has established [COVID-19 assessment centres](#). If there is a need for in-person assessment, 811 will refer you to a centre. Please do not go to a COVID-19 assessment centre without having been referred by 811.

People in Nova Scotia who have been directed to self-isolate can receive supporting health information from Nova Scotia Health Authority Public Health by [contacting the nearest office](#).

## If you self-isolate or feel unwell:

- Avoid close contact with people with chronic conditions, compromised immune systems and older adults
- Avoid having visitors to your home
- Avoid situations like social gatherings, work, school, daycare, visiting other people who are in a health care facility or long-term care residence
- Limit taking public transit, taxis and ride sharing
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water frequently for at least 20 seconds; use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Cover your mouth and nose with your arm when coughing or sneezing

## Related information

- [2019 Novel Coronavirus infection](#)
- [Symptoms and treatment](#)
- [Latest travel advice](#)

## Downloads

Printable information and posters

- [Government of Canada resources](#)
- [Proper hand washing poster \(PDF 185Kb\)](#)
- [Employers and community groups factsheet \(PDF 194Kb\)](#)

- [Individuals and families \(PDF 193Kb\)](#)

## Contact

Government of Canada novel coronavirus information line

Toll free: [1-833-784-4397](tel:1-833-784-4397)

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