

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 COVID-19 in Canada.

This new virus hasn't been seen in humans before and is spreading around the world. The first cases in Canada were reported in January 2020.



[Alerts and notices](#)

Information about potential public exposure, closures and restrictions.



[COVID-19 testing data](#)

Nova Scotia is testing for COVID-19 and reporting results daily.



[When to seek help](#)

What to do if you might have come in contact with COVID-19, when to call 811, and how to self-isolate.



[Protecting yourself from coronavirus](#)

Advice about prevention, being prepared, and social distancing.



[Travel advice](#)

What to do if you're planning to travel, or if you've recently returned from another country.



[Government's response to coronavirus](#)

How our health system is preparing for coronavirus cases.

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 [Facebook](#)

 [Latest press conferences \(YouTube\)](#)

Alerts and notices

Potential COVID-19 exposure

Nova Scotia Health Authority Public Health is advising of a potential low-risk public exposure to COVID-19 at two Halifax locations between Thursday, March 5 and Saturday, March 7. Read more on the [NSHA website](#).

Travel advisories and self-isolation requirements

The Government of Canada has issued an [official travel advisory](#) asking Canadians to avoid non-essential travel outside Canada until further notice.

The Province of Nova Scotia, under the authority of the Health Protection Act, is requiring anyone who has travelled outside Canada to self-isolate for 14 days upon return, even if you are symptom-free.

Public health inspectors will be onsite at the Halifax International Airport and the J.A. Douglas McCurdy Sydney

Airport.

Notices and closures

The following restrictions are in place under the Authority of the Health Protection Act:

- Long-term care facilities are closed to all visitors.
- Public schools will be closed for two weeks following March Break (weeks of March 23 and March 30).
- All licensed childcare providers are required to close (through April 3 inclusive).
- March Break camps are cancelled.
- Casinos in Halifax and Sydney are closed and bar owners can no longer operate VLTs.
- Employers cannot require a doctor's note if an employee must be off work.
- All service providers funded through the Department of Community Services' Disability Support Program, including social enterprises, day programs, and supported employment programs for adults with diverse abilities are closed.

Effectively immediately, there are to be no gatherings of more than 50 people.

Organizations and businesses are required to practise social distancing of two metres (6 feet).

No tenant can be evicted because their income has been impacted by COVID-19, effective immediately for the next 3 months.

University students from Nova Scotia who are still living in residences need to go home, to provide space for social distancing for those students from outside the province who are not able to travel.

As of Thursday, 19 March:

- restaurants are restricted to take-out and delivery orders only. They can't open for in-person dining.
- all drinking establishments, winery and distillery tasting rooms and craft taprooms must close (private liquor stores can operate, and craft breweries, wineries, and distilleries can still sell their products from their storefronts).
- personal services, such as hair salons, barber shops, spas, nail salons, and body art establishments must close.
- all fitness establishments, such as gyms, must close.

Nova Scotia Health Authority and IWK Health Centre

Nova Scotia Health Authority has restricted visitors and is suspending some elective and non-urgent appointments and services to contain the spread of COVID-19 and conserve resources. Read more on the [NSHA website](#).

IWK Health Centre has [restricted visitors](#) and is [suspending all non-urgent appointments and services](#). Urgent and emergency appointments and services are continuing. Read more on the [IWK website](#).

Government office and facility closures

Check the [closures page](#) for up-to-date provincial government office and facility closures.

[Top](#) ↑

COVID-19 testing data

Nova Scotia is testing for COVID-19. Updated 19 March 2020.

Confirmed Positive *	5
Presumptive Positive**	9
Negative***	1373

* Confirmed cases are those confirmed by the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg.

** Presumptive cases are those found to have a presumptive positive result from the QEII Health Sciences Centre's Microbiology Lab and have been sent to the National Microbiology Lab and are awaiting confirmation.

*** Negative cases are those found to have a negative confirmation by either the QEII Health Sciences Centre's Microbiology Lab or the National Microbiology Lab.

[Top](#) 

When to seek help

Symptoms

Symptoms of novel coronavirus include fever, cough, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia.

The severity can range from mild to severe, and in some cases, infection can lead to death. Current information suggests most people don't experience severe illness or need to be hospitalized.

What to do if you think you might have come in contact with COVID-19

If you've travelled

The Province of Nova Scotia, under the authority of the Health Protection Act, is requiring anyone who has travelled outside Canada to self-isolate for 14 days from the day they get back to Canada. You must self-isolate even if you don't have symptoms.

If you've travelled recently and you develop a fever, with a temperature 38°C or higher, or a cough, you should call 811 for assessment.

When to call 811

Not everyone who has concerns about COVID-19 needs to call 811. To find out if you need to call, use the [COVID-19 online self-assessment](#).

Testing

Nova Scotia Health Authority has established [COVID-19 assessment centres](#). If you need in-person assessment, 811 will refer you to a centre. Don't go to a COVID-19 assessment centre unless 811 referred you.

If you self isolate

If you are returning from travel outside Canada, you are directed to self-isolate for 14 days.

This means:

- go directly home; avoid work, school or other public areas

- limit contact with people you live with, if you have symptoms
- use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if possible, if you have symptoms
- take and record your temperature daily and avoid fever reducing medications (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen)
- call 811 if you have a fever above 38°C, cough and/or difficulty breathing
- make plans to have groceries and other supplies delivered
- avoid anyone with chronic conditions, compromised immune system or older adults
- do not have visitors to your home
- do not use public transit/taxi

In your home:

- keep shared spaces (e.g. kitchens, bathrooms) clean and well ventilated
- use soap and water to clean dishes and utensils after each use
- clean door handles, light switches, railings, remotes, and other high-touch areas daily
- clean your home and household items with store bought disinfectant or diluted bleach (one part bleach to nine parts water)
- wash clothes, and linens using regular laundry soap and water (60-90°C).
- do not share personal items (toothbrushes, clothing, towels, drinks, etc.)
- if available, use disposable gloves and protective clothing (e.g. plastic aprons) when cleaning anything soiled with bodily fluids

Protect yourself:

- wash your hands with soap and water regularly or use hand sanitizer
- cough into your sleeve or tissue and discard immediately
- do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth

Safe activities if no symptoms (while keeping your distance from others):

- going for a walk or riding your bike
- sitting on your deck or balcony
- yard work

The Government of Canada has additional resources about [how to self isolate](#) and [how to care for someone with COVID-19](#).

[Top](#) ↑

Protecting yourself from coronavirus

There are currently no vaccines available to protect you against the novel coronavirus. Nova Scotians are encouraged to think about what they can do to stay healthy and [prevent the spread of any respiratory illness](#), including COVID-19.

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.

Advice for individuals and families

Reducing contact with other people

Nova Scotians are encouraged to practice social distancing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Social distancing means limiting your contact with other people – stay about 2 metres (6 feet) apart.

Government is requiring individuals, employers and organizations to limit social gatherings to no more than 50 people.

Activities to avoid:

- group gatherings (e.g. birthday parties, weddings, funerals, etc.)
- having visitors over to your home
- sleepovers, playdates and other social interactions with friends
- public spaces (e.g. malls, gyms, theatres, social events)
- crowded stores

Use caution if you:

- must travel
- need to visit public spaces like grocery stores
- plan to attend church/faith gatherings
- will be active in outdoor places (parks, trails, etc.) with others
- are visiting a restaurant to pick up take out

Safe activities include:

- family game night
- watching your favourite shows
- video chatting
- spring cleaning
- read a book
- listen to music
- sit outside on your deck
- take a walk or ride your bike
- yard work
- play outside
- cooking
- check on a friend

Practise 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 aren't available (and your hands aren't visibly dirty), use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Use enough to cover the fronts and backs of both hands and between all fingers. Rub hands together until they feel dry.

Use cough and 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.

If you don't have a tissue, cough and sneeze into your elbow, not your hand.

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

Clean high-touch surfaces and objects often

Viruses can live on surfaces for several days. Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch surfaces and objects can reduce germs and prevent infection. You should clean at least once a day, or more if needed.

Clean and disinfect items like doorknobs, light switches, railings, toilets and tabletops daily. Wash with soapy water first. Then disinfect using household cleaning products, following 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. Don't panic buy or stockpile.

Make sure your prescriptions are filled.

Think about what you'll 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.

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
- watch for discrimination or 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.

Advice for employers and community groups

Employers should think about what they can do to help staff stay healthy and prevent spread of any respiratory illness, including COVID-19.

Support your employees if they need to stay home

The Province of Nova Scotia, under the authority of the Health Protection Act, is requiring anyone who has travelled outside Canada to self-isolate for 14 days upon return, even if you are symptom-free.

Employers cannot require a doctor's note if an employee must be off work.

Consider how you can support your employees while they're in self-isolation. Talk with your employees about flexible hours or alternative work arrangements if they need to stay home.

Consider limiting events

Businesses and community groups are encouraged to limit events and social gatherings to no more than 50 people or much smaller, if possible. This could include events like weddings, religious services, movie screenings and concerts. This will help protect vulnerable Nova Scotians who are at risk for serious illness.

Other steps businesses and community groups can take

As well as following the advice for individuals, businesses and community groups should:

- make sure you have a business continuity or emergency plan in place
- think about what you'll do if several of your employees get sick
- post handwashing signs and provide alcohol-based hand rub to encourage frequent hand hygiene
- make sure spaces and surfaces are cleaned
- remove non-essential items like magazines, stuffed toys, and other items that can't be easily cleaned from reception areas

[Top](#) ↑

Travel advice

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The Province of Nova Scotia, under the authority of the Health Protection Act, is requiring anyone who has travelled outside Canada to self-isolate for 14 days upon return, even if you are symptom-free.

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 chooses to travel outside Canada with these restrictions in place, please consider if:

- the Government of Canada has issued a [travel health notice](#) 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 in case 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.

[Top](#) ↑

Government's response to coronavirus

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

The province and its health system partners are working to increase capacity within the health system. This includes:

- doctors and pharmacists have new options for virtual care, using telephone and secure videoconferencing
- pharmacists can renew prescriptions for most medications and government will cover the assessment fee
- College of Physicians and Surgeons waiving the fee for retired doctors to renew their licences so they can come back to work
- retired and other nurses are being brought into the system to assist with 811 staffing

The province has made the following announcements to help vulnerable Nova Scotians:

- every individual and family member on income assistance will receive an additional \$50 starting Friday, 20 March. People do not need to apply.
- \$1 million to help Feed Nova Scotia purchase food and hire more staff.
- emergency funding of \$230,000 for Senior Safety Programs and Community Links to help vulnerable older adults.

[Top](#) ↑

Related information

- [Provincial government closures](#)
- [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#)
- [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 \(PDF 193Kb\)](#)
- [Prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
- [Information on how to self-isolate](#)
- [Information on social distancing](#)

Contact

Government of Canada novel coronavirus information line

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

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