

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 the state of emergency, restrictions and closures.



[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.



[Staying healthy](#)

Advice about prevention, preparation, social distancing, safety concerns at work and mental health.



[Support for Nova Scotians, businesses and health care](#)

How we're helping individuals and families, seniors, businesses and the health care system.



Changes to education during COVID-19

Our plan for at-home learning while schools are closed.

Stay informed

 [Twitter](#)

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

 [Latest COVID-19 videos \(YouTube\)](#)

 [COVID-19 videos for kids \(YouTube\)](#)

 [Q&A with Dr. Strang \(YouTube\)](#)

 [COVID-19 Updates podcast](#)

Alerts and notices

Possible exposure to COVID-19

Nova Scotia Health Authority Public Health is advising of potential COVID-19 exposure:

- March 11 – [Highland Eye Care at 193 Dalhousie Street, New Glasgow](#)
- March 12 – [Charles V. Keating Centre at 1100 Convocation Blvd., Antigonish](#)
- March 14 – [Lake Echo Community Centre at 3168A Highway #7, Lake Echo](#)
- March 23/24 – [Rob Bitar's Ristorante, 689 Highway 2, Elmsdale](#)

Provincial State of Emergency

On 22 March, the Province of Nova Scotia declared a state of emergency to help contain the spread of COVID-19. The state of emergency will be in effect for 14 days and may be renewed. The emergency order is valid until noon on 5 April 2020.

- [Health Protection Act Order by the Medical Officer of Health](#) (PDF 174 KB)
- [Declaration of Provincial State of Emergency](#) (PDF 42 KB)
- [Direction of the Minister under a Declared State of Emergency](#) (PDF 91 KB)
- [Direction of Minister – Municipal Meetings](#) (PDF 50 KB)
- [Direction of Minister – Municipal Public Transit](#) (PDF 33 KB)
- [Direction of Minister - Nova Scotia Police Act](#) (149 KB)

Nova Scotians should not leave the province and only leave home for essential items and services. If possible, one person per family should be designated to do these tasks. Under the state of emergency:

- Nova Scotia borders will tighten to travellers and all entry points (land, sea, air) will be closely managed. Anyone entering the province will be stopped, questioned, and told to self-isolate for 14 days. Exemptions for cross-border travel include healthy workers in trades and transportations sectors who move goods and people (e.g. truck drivers); healthy people going to work (e.g. health-care workers); and people travelling into the province for essential health services (e.g. chemotherapy treatment).
- Provincial parks, beaches, and tourist attractions are closed. Provincial trails will remain open for exercise. Gathering limits and social distancing guidelines must be followed.
- Police are authorized to enforce orders under the Health Protection Act. If Nova Scotians and businesses do not practice social distancing and self-isolation, they will face fines of \$1,000 for individuals and \$7,500 for businesses. Multiple fines can be given each day an individual or business fails to comply. Police can also enforce offences under the Emergency Management Act. For example, fines for charging higher than fair market prices for goods and services.
- Landlords are not permitted to change locks or seize property of businesses who cannot pay rent, if the business closed directly because of COVID public health orders.
- There are several groups who are essential and exempt from gathering limits, but must still maintain social distancing and other public health protocols. They include:
 - health
 - food, agrifood and fisheries
 - transportation, including trucking, rail and transit
 - construction and manufacturing
 - IT, telecommunications and critical infrastructure
 - public services, such as police, fire and ambulances

Law enforcement enforce orders under the Emergency Management Act and Health Protection Act. If you are aware of someone not following provincial direction, have a conversation with them first – they may need help. If a call to police is needed, please call a [non-emergency number](#) for the police that serve your community. Do not call 911.

Closures and restrictions

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

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

Gatherings and social distancing

- There are to be no social gatherings of more than 5 people.
- Any workplace or business that is not deemed essential (or not already required to be closed) can remain open as long as a two-metre (6 foot) distance can be maintained.

Schools and child care

- Public schools will be closed until at least 1 May 2020.
- All licensed childcare providers are required to close until at least 1 May 2020.

Restaurants, bars, and casinos

- Restaurants are restricted to take-out and delivery orders only. Hotel restaurants can still provide room service and take-out, but their dining areas must close.
- 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.
- Casinos in Halifax and Sydney are closed; bar owners can no longer operate VLTs.

Health professions

- Regulated health professions can only stay open for emergency or urgent cases or to provide virtual care, excluding doctors, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, nurses and paramedics, as long as they can meet social distancing requirements in their waiting room or other non-clinical areas and follow the cleaning protocol.
- Non-regulated health professions (such as naturopaths) must close. One exception is podiatrists who must follow the directive related to regulated health professions.
- Dentists can no longer practice dentistry in their offices unless they deem it necessary to perform an emergency dental procedure in the best interest of the patient's health.

Other businesses

- Veterinarians, including veterinary surgeons and veterinary physicians, can only provide in-patient emergency or urgent care services, essential veterinary supply chain services (like prescription refills or prescription food) and virtual care services.
- Personal services, like hair salons, barber shops, spas, nail salons, and body art establishments must close.
- All fitness establishments, like gyms, must close.

Long-term care facilities

- Long-term care facilities are closed to all visitors.

Other directives from government include:

- Employers cannot require a doctor's note if an employee must be off work.
- No tenant can be evicted because their income has been impacted by COVID-19 (effective for 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.
- All day programs, supported employment and social enterprise service providers funded through the Department of Community Services' Disability Support Program have been asked to 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](#).

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 Nova Scotia to self-isolate for 14 days from the day they get back to the province, even if they do not have symptoms. Public health inspectors will be onsite at the Halifax Stanfield International Airport and the J.A. Douglas McCurdy Sydney Airport.

Your responsibilities under the Health Protection Act order

To understand whether you need to self isolate, or whether your business can stay open, read [What the Health Protection Act Order means for Nova Scotians](#). Or [use the COVID-19 employer assessment tool](#) to see what your business needs to do.

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COVID-19 testing data

Nova Scotia is testing for COVID-19. Updated 31 March 2020.

Positive *	147
Negative**	5,763

* Positive cases are those found to have a positive confirmation by either the QEII Health Sciences Centre's Microbiology Lab or the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg.

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

When to seek help

Symptoms

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

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 Nova Scotia to self-isolate for 14 days from the day they get back to the province, even if they do not have symptoms.

If you've travelled recently and you develop a fever and/or new 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 Nova Scotia, you are directed to self-isolate for 14 days from the day you get back to the province, even if you do not have symptoms.

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 and/or new cough
- 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):

- 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](#).

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Staying healthy during COVID-19

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 required 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 5

people.

Avoid:

- group gatherings (ex: parties, weddings, funerals, bridge clubs)
- visitors in your home
- sleepovers and playdates and other social interactions with friends
- public spaces (ex: malls, gyms, theatres, crowded stores)
- parks
- non-essential travel
- athletic events

Use caution:

- grocery stores
- pharmacies
- gas stations
- essential medical appointments
- take out restaurants
- public transit
- essential travel

Safe activities include:

- Spring cleaning
- TV, books, music, movies at home
- sit on your deck
- a walk in your neighbourhood
- yard work
- cook a meal
- Call, message, video chat loved ones

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.

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 Nova Scotia to self-isolate for 14 days from the day they get back to the province, even if they do not have symptoms.

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 are required to stay home.

Consider limiting events

Businesses and community groups are required to limit events and social gatherings to no more than 5 people. 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

Working during COVID-19

If you're an employer or employee and you have questions or concerns about work during COVID-19, contact the Department of Labour and Advanced Education for help.

Safety concerns

Workplaces are required to take precautions to ensure the health and safety of their employees and clients. If you're worried about safety in the workplace, you should talk to your immediate supervisor. If the situation isn't resolved, contact your Occupational Health and Safety Committee if you have one, or call the Safety Branch at [1-800-952-2687](tel:1-800-952-2687).

If you're a business owner or manager and you want workplace safety advice, call the Safety Branch at [1-800-952-2687](tel:1-800-952-2687).

Leaves, layoffs and other labour questions

If you have questions about the Labour Code, like taking leave or being laid off, contact the Labour Standards Division at [1-888-315-0110](tel:1-888-315-0110).

Mental well-being

A new virus like COVID-19 can create fear and anxiety. There are ways to manage your symptoms and get help if you need it. Learn more about protecting your [mental health during COVID-19](#).

Support for Nova Scotians, businesses and health care

How we're supporting individuals and families, seniors, businesses and the health care system during COVID-19.

Support for individuals and families

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

Income assistance

Every individual and family member on income assistance will receive an additional \$50 starting Friday, 20 March. People do not need to apply.

We're also extending the hours of our toll-free line for income assistance supports, including weekends.

Feed Nova Scotia and community food banks

We're giving \$1 million to help Feed Nova Scotia purchase food and hire more staff, and \$55,000 to support 12 smaller community food banks.

Cell phones for the most vulnerable

Government is partnering with Telus to provide 100 phones and calling plans to the most vulnerable Department of Community Services clients who have no other means of communication, and who may be self-isolated and alone.

Transition houses

We're giving \$200,000 to support transition houses and other organizations that serve vulnerable women and children.

Suspending student loan payments

Nova Scotia Student Loan payments are suspended until 30 September 2020. You don't need to make any payments, and your loans won't accrue interest. The suspension is automatic – you don't need to apply.

Support for seniors

Community Links and Seniors' Safety Programs are programs that respond to the needs of vulnerable older adults across the province. Government is investing \$230,000 in these programs to expand their capacity to provide more supports and services like:

- volunteers for delivering groceries
- technological options for keeping people connected by phone
- responding to other social issues as they emerge

If you need non-emergency, non-medical help, call 211 or visit ns.211.ca. 211 is a toll free helpline that connects you to community and social services in your area. This toll free helpline is available 24/7 in over 140 languages.

If you are accepting help from someone you don't know, please remember to protect your own privacy and safety and [follow these tips](#).

Keeping long-term care residents connected

We're distributing 800 iPads to long-term care homes across the province so residents can connect with family and friends.

Support for businesses

Government has made these announcements to support businesses:

Commercial rent deferral

To support small and medium-sized businesses, landlords are encouraged to defer rent payments from their commercial tenants for 3 months, spreading the deferred rent amount over the rest of the lease term.

If you're deferring rent because your tenant's business is closed due to the Health Protection Act order, you could be eligible for coverage (up to a maximum of \$50,000 per landlord and \$15,000 per tenant) if you can't recover the deferred rent.

To be eligible for the COVID-19 Small Business Rental Deferral Guarantee Program, landlords must register with the Department of Business by 3 April by emailing NSRentDeferral@novascotia.ca:

- landlord's legal name
- for each deferral agreement:
 - business's legal name
 - business's address
 - total dollar amount of rent being deferred for the period of 1 April to 30 June 2020

The rent deferral agreement must be in place by 1 April.

For more information read the [COVID-19 Rent Deferral Support Program guidelines](#) (PDF 188 kB).

You can use one of these forms to document the deferral agreement with your tenant.

- [Rent Deferral Agreement – Gross Lease](#) (PDF 206 kB)
- [Rent Deferral Agreement – Net Lease](#) (PDF 206 kB)

Changes to payments

- Government will defer payments until June 30 for all government loans, including those under the Farm Loan Board, Fisheries and Aquaculture Loan Board, Jobs Fund, Nova Scotia Business Fund, Municipal Finance Corp. and Housing Nova Scotia.
- Government will defer payments until June 30 for small business renewal fees, including business registration renewal fees and workers compensation premiums (a list of fees will be posted online early next week).
- Changes to the Small Business Loan Guarantee Program, administered through credit unions, include deferring principal and interest payments until June 30, enhancing the program to make it easier for businesses to access credit up to \$500,000, and for those who might not qualify for a loan, government will guarantee the first \$100,000.
- Small businesses which do business with the government will be paid within five days instead of the standard 30 days.

Measures for restaurants

- Starting 30 March, restaurants can include alcohol purchases with take-out and delivery orders, as long as the alcohol cost is no more than 3 times the value of food ordered.

Funding for high-speed internet

- We're providing providing \$15 million as an incentive to providers to speed up projects under the Internet for Nova Scotia Initiative and complete them as soon as possible.

COVID-19 employer assessment tool

Some businesses must close under the Health Protection Act order. Others can remain open if they meet certain requirements. Use the [COVID-19 employer assessment tool](#) to see what your business needs to do.

The Government of Canada has [funding and other resources available](#) for Canadians and businesses.

Health system response

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:

- increased testing for COVID-19 -- public health officials have begun testing all close contacts of positive cases
- lab capacity is doubling to accommodate increased testing
- expanding virtual care for physicians, nurse practitioners and others so they can offer appointments to patients through telephone or video, minimizing the need to leave the house
- 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
- 811 has increased staff and technology and is now answering 50 per cent more calls; capacity will double again on April 3
- enhanced infection control measures at hospitals to protect health-care workers and the public including increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfection, focusing on high-risk areas and high-traffic areas and high-touch surfaces and using stronger cleaning products

How your organization can help

We welcome help from businesses and organizations who can supply emergency products and solutions to support our response to COVID-19. [Find out what we're looking for.](#)

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Related information

- [States of Emergency in Nova Scotia](#)
- [Provincial government closures](#)
- [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](#)
- [2019 Novel Coronavirus infection](#)
- [Symptoms and treatment](#)
- [Latest travel advice](#)
- [Mental health and well-being](#)

Downloads

Printable information and posters

- [Government of Canada resources](#)
- [Proper hand washing poster \(PDF 185 kB\)](#)
- [Employers and community groups factsheet \(PDF 194 kB\)](#)
- [Individuals and families \(PDF 193 kB\)](#)
- [Prevent the spread of COVID-19](#)
- [Information on how to self-isolate](#)
- [Information on social distancing](#)
- [Social distancing poster \(PDF 692 kB\)](#)
- [A letter to Nova Scotians from Dr. Strang \(PDF 158 kB\)](#)

Contact

Government of Canada novel coronavirus information line

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

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