

# COVID-19 Update

For more information:  
Canada.ca/coronavirus

Information for Indigenous communities:  
Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous



## INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA – Ontario Region – June 2, 2022

### Substance use and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has coincided with a worsening substance use crisis. Community members who use substances [may experience a greater impact from COVID-19](#) due to crowded living quarters, a toxic street drug supply, withdrawal, and/or worsening underlying health conditions. Getting a full series of COVID-19 vaccines reduces the risk of extreme COVID-19 illness for those with underlying health conditions, such as substance use.

COVID-19 vaccines can contribute to harm reduction for those with problematic substance use by lowering their risk of illness. Work with health care providers in your community and reach out to harm reduction organizations for advice on ensuring that this population has access to COVID-19 vaccines in a safe and supportive environment. For more information about supporting community members who use substances, check out the [COVID-19 and substance use toolkit](#).

### Promoting vaccines ahead of summer gatherings

Summer is coming, bringing many opportunities to celebrate. In anticipation of upcoming events, ISC has developed [new resources that encourage COVID-19 vaccination](#) to make community gatherings safer. This package includes a public service announcement; infographics; and social media posts with accompanying images. Consider incorporating these into your vaccination outreach plan to promote protection from serious health outcomes.

### Update: Accessing dental services during the pandemic

As a result of restrictions put in place by the regulatory body for dentists, certain dental procedures have not been available in some Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA) communities during the pandemic. To address this and to ensure no clients are without services, ISC can arrange for patients to be seen by dentists outside of their community, if necessary. Clients can also schedule their own appointments outside of their community with a referral. [ISC has detailed the process for both options in a new dental services update](#).

The update also includes important information about accessing tele-dentistry and what ISC is doing to clear the backlog of children requiring dental surgery. We encourage you to share [the full update](#) with your community members and Health Director to ensure this information makes its way to all affected clients.

### COVID-19 in wastewater

Wastewater surveillance data can be a helpful tool in assessing COVID-19 cases in your region, and for monitoring the circulation of variants of concern. The Public Health Agency of Canada publishes this wastewater data in an [online dashboard](#) using information from key major Canadian cities. While your community may not be listed, helpful information can still be found for nearby regions. The dashboard is also expected to gradually expand the number of cities it surveils. More information about the dashboard can be found [here](#). If you are interested in finding out whether wastewater surveillance for COVID-19 will work for your community, please contact Dr. James Brooks at ISC ([james.brooks@sac-isc.gc.ca](mailto:james.brooks@sac-isc.gc.ca)).

### COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario

\*All data reflects totals from 8 p.m. on June 1, 2022

- **15,179** Daily doses administered
- **33,390,569** Total doses administered
- **12,205,080** People fully vaccinated

### COVID-19 Cases

\*As of May 26, 2022 at 7:00 P.M. EST

- **18,955** confirmed in-community
- **235** active cases on reserve
- **66** deaths
- **18,654** resolved (98.4%)

For the most up-to-date national information on COVID-19, visit the [Indigenous Services Canada](#) website or the Government of Canada's Twitter and Facebook pages at @GCIIndigenous and @GCIIndigenousHealth.

# Other Updates

## Emergency Management Assistance Program – FireSmart

The Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP) provides funding to First Nation communities so they can build skills to address emergency events, including wildland fires. It prioritizes the four pillars of emergency management: mitigation/prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. Through the FireSmart funding stream, EMAP provides training to First Nations teams in wildfire suppression duties, as well as fuel management and vegetation clearing—which reduce the intensity and spread of wildfires. FireSmart project funding is available for multiple initiatives including wildfire pre-suppression planning, prescribed burning, wildland fire crew training, and youth engagement.

There is no deadline to apply. Proposals will be reviewed until all funding is used. To learn more on [how to apply](#) and eligible initiatives, please visit the FireSmart [webpage](#).

## Taking care this summer: Lyme disease

Lyme disease is one of the infections transmitted from the bite of blacklegged ticks infected with the Lyme disease bacteria. These ticks are commonly found outdoors from spring through fall, ranging in size from as small as a poppy seed to slightly larger than a sesame seed.

Lyme disease is easiest to treat when identified early. Initial [symptoms differ from person to person](#), making diagnosis very difficult. Some individuals will experience mild symptoms like fever or a skin rash soon after being bitten, while others may develop symptoms only weeks after the bite. If you find a tick on yourself or family member, contact your health care provider for treatment to stop the infection before it starts. If you have symptoms of Lyme disease, you should contact your healthcare provider right away, as antibiotic therapy is highly effective.

The key to preventing Lyme disease and other infections that may be transmitted by ticks, is prevention. Preventing tick bites, careful checking for ticks that may be attached to you, and early removal of ticks can all contribute to reducing your chances of contracting Lyme disease. If you find a tick on yourself, submit it to your local public health unit for testing. Information on how to collect and submit the tick can be found [here](#).

To learn on how to be protected when venturing into forests and overgrown areas, individuals can refer to this [prevention toolkit](#), as well as this guide on what to do [if they find a tick attached to their skin](#). For other information and [resources](#), visit [Canada's Lyme page](#).

## Accessing infant formula during the shortage

For feeding infants up to one year of gestational age, the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program provides coverage for multiple formulas used for medical reasons. While there is currently a shortage of Similac Alimentum infant formula in Canada, NIHB clients can access multiple alternative infant formulas through their pharmacy. If anyone in your community is having difficulty accessing Similac Alimentum formula, they can ask their pharmacy provider to secure a different infant formula for them by contacting the NIHB Drug Exception Centre at 1-800-580-0950.

## Taking care this summer: Blastomycosis

Blastomycosis is an infection which can result from breathing in spores from the blastomyces fungus. Found across northern Ontario, the fungus grows in thickly wooded areas and along streams and rivers where there is moist soil, leaves, rotting plants, and wood. The spores can become airborne when soil or organic matter is disturbed, which allows it to be breathed into the lungs. The fungus that causes blastomycosis is commonly found throughout Ontario and the United States. Cases have also been reported in Manitoba, near the Great Lakes, and the St. Lawrence Seaway. The infection primarily affects the lungs of individuals who contract it, and symptoms can take up to three months to develop. Symptoms commonly develop in the late fall/winter after summer/early fall exposure. Many people do not have any symptoms and recover from infection on their own. Others may become mildly or severely ill, sometimes resulting in hospitalization, or death, if untreated. Blastomycosis is treatable, and early diagnosis and treatment is the best way to prevent serious health outcomes.

### Symptoms include:

- A cough that won't go away
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Fever or night sweats
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme fatigue

These symptoms overlap with other health conditions. If an individual is experiencing these symptoms, even if they have had them for a long time, it is recommended that they speak with a health provider for further assessment.

## Help is available whenever you need it.

Immediate support is available 24/7  
for all Indigenous people in Canada.

Hope for Wellness Help Line and Chat  
**1-855-242-3310 or [www.hopeforwellness.ca](http://www.hopeforwellness.ca)**

Indian Residential Schools Crisis Line  
**1-866-925-4419**

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women  
and Girls Support Line  
**1-844-413-6649**



Please feel free to contact the FNIHB Ontario COVID-19 generic inbox: [sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca) if you or your community members have any information needs.