

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: March 20, 2020

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

Please email questions about COVID-19 to: [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

On March 17 the Alberta government declared a state of public health emergency, empowering authorities under the Public Health Act to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. New public health measures are now recommended to limit the time Albertans spend in large crowds and crowded spaces.

COVID-19 can be contained by everyone working together to reduce risk and keep all Albertans safe. It will be important to share important health messaging related to the COVID-19 within your networks and reinforce messaging for steps individuals, families, and communities can take to protect their health.

### Status Update

Number of cases reported\*, as of March 20, 2020:

*\*numbers are changing rapidly and may change after this bulletin is released*

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Cases	195	895
Deaths	1	10

- There are identified cases of COVID-19 in **all** Alberta Health zones: Calgary zone (**126**); Edmonton zone (**43**); Central zone (**4**); South zone (**5**); and North zone (**17**).
- COVID-19 constitutes a public health emergency as a new highly infectious virus that poses significant risk to public health. The Alberta Government is continuing to move forward with more aggressive measures to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in Alberta. Additional actions may be required in the coming days.

### Testing in Alberta

- Alberta is testing for COVID-19. Testing is currently focused on individuals who have developed symptoms, even mild ones, within 14 days of returning from travel outside Canada; or who have had contact with someone diagnosed as having COVID-19.

Test results	Negative	Positive
Completed tests (as of March 19)	20,360	195

- **FNIHB-AB is working with Alberta Health Services to ensure all First Nations have access to testing on-reserve as needed.**
- Alberta Health Services has developed an **online self-assessment tool** [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to help determine whether an individual should be tested for COVID-19.
- You do not need to be tested for COVID-19 if in the past 14 days you have not travelled outside Canada OR have not been exposed to someone who has COVID-19 OR have symptoms; **use the online self-assessment tool** to determine whether you need to call 811 to get tested.
- If you are awaiting COVID-19 test results, do not call Health Link. You will be called directly; results can take up to four days.

### ***Government of Canada's support to Indigenous communities***

The Government of Canada has announced a number of **emergency funding measures** to support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Indigenous Services Canada Alberta (ISC- AB) region will be receiving funding to support emergency management, infection prevention and control, community preparedness measures, and surge capacity resources as required.

- The following are initial measures to alleviate immediate pressures Nations are facing:
  - Each First Nation will receive an initial funding allocation of \$125,000 immediately under the Emergency Management Assistance Program to support emergency management and planning needs; and,
  - Earlier this fiscal year, \$22,047 was allocated to each First Nation in Alberta through Health Emergency Management as part of Budget 2019 to support planning and preparedness activities.
- Operational details related to recent funding announcements are evolving. Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) Alberta region is committed to share all further information and allocations as they become available.
- ISC will continue to focus on a needs-based process as identified in each Nation's Business Continuity Plan and the Pandemic Annex of a Nations Emergency Management Plan. For any further funding questions please email [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

### ***Current Public Health Actions***

- The Government of Canada has closed the borders to non-essential travel.
- Alberta's public health officials and our federal counterparts have put more precautionary measures in place to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- The health care system is preparing for an increase in the number of cases that need hospital care.
- A comprehensive range of prevention and control measures are in place in Alberta to reduce risk of spread of illness in Alberta.
  - Updating self-isolation and self-monitoring recommendations for returning travellers experiencing symptoms, as required.
  - **Tracing all close contacts of presumptive and confirmed cases, testing and isolating those who are symptomatic, and asking even those who are well to self-isolate for 14 days after their last contact with the case.**

### ***What FNIHB is doing***

- As with any other communicable disease on-reserve in Alberta, FNIHB-AB is providing public health case and contact management for any confirmed, or probable COVID-19 cases in a community.
- FNIHB is supporting access to testing for FN on reserve when possible, in the home, and in nearby AHS sites.
- FNIHB-AB has developed a Communicable Disease Emergency (CDE) Plan template/toolkit to support Nations in preparing for communicable disease emergencies, including COVID-19. The template has been sent to communities and FNIHB-AB is working with communities to review plans and provide feedback.
- FNIHB-AB has launched a series of telehealth sessions for First Nations in Alberta focused on sharing information about COVID-19, responding to questions from communities and sharing information on specific priority areas. All previous telehealth sessions were recorded and are available at <http://www.fntn.ca> or on the Onehealth.ca website. The last session was on 'Environmental cleaning and disinfection'. **The next telehealth session will be held on Thursday March 26, 2020** and will focus on "**Nursing – contact tracing and testing**". Information on how to register will be sent shortly.

### ***Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Health Centre Staff and Patients***

- FNIHB is working with the province and is in the process of accessing PPE through the national pandemic stockpile, for each First Nation in Alberta.

- On March 17, 2020, the ISC-AB Communicable Disease team engaged directly with First Nations nursing teams to facilitate the completion of a PPE National Stockpile Request Form.
- To avoid duplication and ensure PPE is distributed efficiently on an as needed basis we ask that you please work directly with your Nation's nursing team to confirm the appropriate PPE request form has been completed and returned to ISC-AB.
- If communities are unable to access PPE supplies (procedure/surgical masks, gowns, face shields gloves, etc.) please email [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

### **Mass Gatherings**

Effective March 17, **upon the declaration of the public health emergency in Alberta**, new public health measures are now required to limit the time Albertans spend in large crowds and crowded spaces.

- Mass gatherings are now limited to no more than 50 attendees.
  - This includes: large sporting events, conferences and community events, as well as worship gatherings and family events – including weddings and funerals (wakes).
  - This does **not** include: grocery stores, shopping centres, health care facilities, airports, the legislature and other essential services.
  - Not-for-profit community kitchens, soup kitchens and religious kitchens are **exempt** at this time, but sanitization practices are expected to be in place and support will be in place for this practice.
- Places of worship are no longer exempt from restrictions on mass gatherings.
- All long-term care and other continuing care facilities are advised to **limit visitation** to essential visitors only.
- To limit the amount of time Albertans are spending in large crowds and crowded spaces, all Albertans are **prohibited** from attending public recreational facilities and private entertainment facilities, including gyms, swimming pools, arenas, science centres, museums, art galleries, 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 until further notice.
- 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.

### **Schools and Daycare**

- 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 to work, either from home or at their workplace. Decisions on how to do this vary depending on the school jurisdiction.
- 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.
- In-person classes at post-secondary institutions are **cancelled** until further notice. Campuses remain open.

### **Information about Travel**

- The Government of Canada has issued a global travel advisory: **avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada until further notice**.
- Alberta Health also recommends that Albertans **DO NOT** travel outside of Canada 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.
- As more flights confirm passengers with COVID-19, Albertans are advised to monitor their air travel **even if it was limited to within Canada**. Flights that have confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the

affected seats will be posted online as information is confirmed. If you recently returned from a flight:

- Please visit <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-flight-information.pdf> to check the list of flights with confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Passengers in affected seats are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure. These passengers should:
  - Self-isolate for 14 days.
  - Monitor for symptoms.
  - Take the [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to determine next steps and find out if testing is required.
- Other passengers are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms.
- Travelers who **returned before March 12**
  - Travelers who returned to Alberta from Italy, Iran, the Hubei Province of China or the Grande Princess Cruise ship, must self-isolate for 14 days, even if they are feeling well.
  - Travelers who returned to Alberta from other destinations outside Canada are encouraged to self-isolate, and monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days.
- Travelers who **returned on or after March 12**
  - **ALL** travelers who returned to Alberta from outside Canada on or after March 12 are required to self-isolate immediately 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. Call 911 if you are seriously ill and need immediate medical attention and inform them that you may have COVID-19.
- If you are unsure if you should be self-isolating, use the online screening tool [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) to determine whether you need to call Health Link 811 to get tested.

### ***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.
  - Please visit <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mhpiip-disaster-pandemic-covid-19-and-your-mental-health.pdf>  
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mhpiip-disaster-pandemic-practical-and-emotional-preparedness.pdf>
  - The Mental Health Help Line [1-877-303-2642](tel:1-877-303-2642) is available 24/7 to provide advice and referrals to community supports near you.
  - Kids and teens can call the Kids Help Phone: [1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868)

### ***Information for visiting Long term Care Facilities and Hospitals***

Individuals over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing health conditions are most at risk of severe symptoms from COVID-19. To prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, among seniors and other vulnerable groups:

- **Only one essential visitor** at a time will be allowed for residents in Long-term Care, Supportive Living and Congregate Living Settings. Essential visitors are those providing care necessary for the well-being of the resident and visitors attending to a resident who is dying. They must be immediate family or a designated person.
- AHS will allow patients to receive **only one visitor at a time** to AHS Acute Care (hospital) facilities.
- **No children will be allowed to visit** long-term care or continuing care facilities or hospitals. This restriction is in place, because children do not necessarily show symptoms of COVID-19, and could therefore pose an unknown risk to the health of patients and staff.
- **Visitors must be feeling well on the date/time of visit.** Visitors will not be allowed to visit if they have an illness that can be transmitted (symptoms including fever, cough, loose stools, rash, or feeling unwell; OR are immunocompromised; OR are on self-isolation for COVID-19; OR are being tested for COVID-19.

- Families and friends of individuals in these facilities are asked to use other methods such as a phone call, video calling or use FaceTime to be in touch with, support and encourage their loved one through this difficult time.

### ***Actions individuals and families can take***

To help protect against all respiratory illnesses, including the flu and COVID-19, you should:

- Practice social distancing.
- Stay home and away from others if you are sick or in isolation.
- Wash hands often, using soap and water for at least twenty seconds.
- When sick, cover your cough and sneezes and then wash your hands.
- Avoid touching face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched.

### ***Actions communities are encouraged to take***

- Update and inform your community members of the evolving situation through existing community communication channels.
- Review and update the pandemic annex of your All-Hazards Emergency Response Plan.
- Be aware of current public health infection prevention and control measures.
- Educate community members on the steps they can take to protect themselves against respiratory illnesses.
- Regularly check trusted sources of information, like the Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services links provided in this bulletin.

### ***Wearing Medical Masks***

- If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended.
- When sick, wearing a mask helps prevent illnesses from being passed on to other people.

### ***Updates and additional information***

If you have general questions about COVID-19 or require current information, please refer to the following websites which are trusted information sources and are being regularly maintained and updated.

**Alberta Health** – [Coronavirus info for Albertans](https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx)  
<https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>

[COVID-19 Data for Alberta](https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx)  
<https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>

**Alberta Health Services** – [novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx)  
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>

**Public Health Agency of Canada** – [2019 novel coronavirus: Outbreak update](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html)  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

**World Health Organization** – [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)  
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

**Indigenous Services Canada COVID-19 Updates available in several languages -**  
<https://www.gotoinfo.ca/ISCIInfo>  
<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298>

**For helpful advice on handling stressful situations and ways to talk to children please visit**

- [Mental health and coping with COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- [Talking with children about COVID-19](#) (CDC)
- [Help in Tough Times](#) (AHS)

**Johns Hopkins University Interactive Dashboard** –  
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

**Previous information bulletins and additional information and resources for health staff can be found at [OneHealth.ca](https://www.onehealth.ca)**

**Anyone with specific questions or concerns about their health is encouraged to call Health Link at 811 for assessment and health advice.**

**Should you have questions about COVID-19, please do not hesitate to email:**  
[sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)