

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: August 21, 2020

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

Please email questions about COVID-19 to: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

The COVID-19 virus is still very much with us and while we can see our efforts are keeping the spread under manageable control, we know the situation can change rapidly. Keeping infection rates low are directly linked to our collective commitment and actions. Much of the current spread continues to be linked to social gatherings, so we need to continue to follow all public health measures closely. Understanding the risks, following public health guidance and taking precautions will continue to keep us, our families and communities safer.

Status Update

Number of cases reported *, as of Aug 21, 2020:

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

Alberta: There are **1,084 active cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta.

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Confirmed Cases	12,604	123,873
Deaths	228	9,054
Recovered	11,292	110,288

First Nations living on reserve in Alberta:

Location (By Zone)	Cases	Active Cases	In Hospital	In ICU	Deaths	Recovered
Calgary Zone	53	2	1	-	-	51
South Zone	50	-	-	-	1	49
Central Zone	3	-	-	-	-	3
North Zone	57	1	-	-	-	56
TOTAL	163	3	1	0	1	159

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **404** confirmed cases of COVID-19 and **6** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta; **141** in Calgary Zone; **63** in Edmonton Zone; **79** in South Zone; **108** in North Zone; **12** in Central zone and **1** unknown.

Further Information: Aggregate data on COVID-19 First Nations cases in Alberta is available at: <http://www.afnigc.ca/main/index.php?id=home> and <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>

Testing in Alberta – Update

- As of Aug 19, 2020, **35,488** First Nation individuals living in Alberta have been tested.
- **Testing is a powerful tool to help limit the spread. It continues to be available to any person with or without symptoms who wants to be tested.**



- As part of Alberta's school re-entry for the 2020/21 school year, Alberta's Chief MOH is recommending **all teachers and school-based staff be tested** prior to school beginning, and regularly throughout the year.
- To support testing of teachers and school staff, Albertans **who do not have COVID-19 symptoms**, and/or who have not been in contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19, are being asked to **postpone testing** until September 1, 2020.
- Most communities have testing capacity through local Health Centres. It is recommended that communities work with local health staff to offer testing to teachers and staff, however, it is important that the priority for testing continues to be for those with COVID-19 symptoms or those who have had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19. In addition to regular testing services, school staff working on-reserve may access testing off reserve by completing the [AHS Self-Assessment Tool](#).
- **Additional provincial-wide asymptomatic testing** has been expanded to provide access at various Shoppers Drug Mart and Loblaws pharmacies, including Superstore and No Frills. This is in addition to province-wide testing offered via AHS and other community pharmacies already offering tests. Additional community pharmacies are encouraged to register voluntarily to offer asymptomatic testing [here](#).
- Communities desiring to expand their local testing capacity are encouraged to reach out to FNIHB-AB through local health staff or email: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

Alberta's Relaunch- Update

- Alberta continues to be in stage two of the provincial relaunch strategy.
- Many jurisdictions now require mask/face covering use in public spaces. Please check with specific municipalities/towns to verify the most up to date public health measures in effect.
- Alberta's [Relaunch Status Map](#) identifies the different **levels of risk** and information about outbreaks and local health measures based on the rate of COVID-19 active cases in each area. Note: Communities smaller than 10,000 such as most First Nations reserves are included in the surrounding municipal district.
- Alberta's school re-entry strategy is underway for return to classroom learning for the 2020/21 school year, and includes mandatory masking for Grade 4-12. For more information and recent updates please see: <https://www.alberta.ca/k-to-12-school-re-entry-2020-21-school-year.aspx>
- Provincial school re-entry plans provide a guide to support the specific approaches of First Nations in Alberta. ISC-AB continues to **work with Nations** and regional education representatives to support the planning and implementation of **school re-entry models reflective** of each Nations' needs. Regular updates on this support, including funding, are continuing to be provided.
- ISC-AB has developed a [checklist](#) to support communities when planning for in-person school attendance. The checklist includes the COVID-19 public health considerations when planning for school re-entry.
- As First Nations communities and leadership plan for relaunch, at their determined pace, ISC-AB Medical Officers of Health (MOHs) and Environmental Public Health Officers (EPHOs) continue to be available to provide public health support. Guidance documents can also be found on [OneHealth](#)
- All regions in Alberta should **continue to follow** Alberta's public health measures and guidelines, regardless of relaunch status.
- More information on the phases of the Alberta's relaunch and key public health measures can be found at [Alberta's relaunch strategy](#), [Alberta's Safely Staged COVID-19 Relaunch](#), and [Alberta Biz Connect](#).

What the Government of Canada and ISC/FNIHB-AB Are Doing

- On August 12, 2020, ISC [announced](#) an additional **\$305 million** in funding for the **Indigenous Community Support Fund** to further support Indigenous leadership with the flexibility to design and implement community-based responses to COVID-19. This additional funding will be distributed through: a combination of allocations directly to First Nations, Inuit and Metis leadership; and,

needs-based funding, which will be application-driven. Further information will be provided by ISC-AB as soon as it becomes available.

- ISC has recently updated its [Accessing additional public health support for First Nations and Inuit communities during COVID-19](#), including **eligible funding to support public health perimeter security**. Additional information on this funding and submissions can be viewed on the July 14, 2020 [Telehealth Session](#) or by emailing: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca
- Through the **Canada Healthy Communities Initiative**, the Government of Canada is providing up to **\$31 million** to support community-led solutions that respond to immediate and ongoing needs arising from COVID-19 over the next two years. The Initiative will fund smaller-scale local projects under three main themes: creating safe and vibrant public spaces, improving mobility options, and digital solutions. More information can be found [here](#).
- Government of Canada is aggressively **pursuing COVID-19 vaccines**, treatments and supplies to protect Canadians and has entered into two agreements with two pharmaceutical companies to secure millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccine candidates. An independent task force has been set up to advise the Government of Canada on options for **Canada's choice** of vaccine.
- The Government of Canada has launched a national [COVID-19 Tracing App and Self-Assessment Tool](#), as well as a new [COVID-19 Mobile Alert App](#).
- The next Alberta COVID-19 First Nations Telehealth session will be held in **September, 2020 (TBD)**. Previous telehealth sessions are recorded and are available at: <https://fntn.ca/>.

Mental Health and Wellness- Update

- **Reminder:** Alberta's [Mental Health and Addiction COVID-19 Community Funding Grant](#) 2nd Call for Proposals **closes August 21, 2020**, providing up to \$10 million for community initiatives aimed at improving coping skills and supporting social connection/healing activities that build community mental wellness and resilience. First Nations/Indigenous groups are encouraged to apply.
- Alberta Health Services operates a **Drug Alert System** for health professionals, providing up to date alerts on drug activity based on each health zone. For more information or to register for your area please contact harm.reduction@ahs.ca
- We continue to be concerned with an increase in opioid related overdoses, including deaths which may have been worsened by this crisis. Resources are available to support those affected.
 - Naloxone is a safe and effective intervention that saves lives:
 - **Province wide injectable program** – Clients are able to access the Take Home Naloxone injection kits at any registered site, including Health Centres, Treatment Centres, medical offices, and pharmacies through Alberta Health Services' Community Based Naloxone (CBN) Program. Information about registration can be found at: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/hrs/if-hrs-cbn-program-distribution-site-manual.pdf>
 - **Narcan® nasal spray** – In Alberta, Narcan® is not covered by the province; however, it is covered through Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB). Only pharmacies are able to bill NIHB for this product for individual clients, therefore clients are only able to access it through a pharmacy. No prescription is required.
 - The **AHS Harm Reduction Services Team** has developed printable handouts that may be useful to provide to clients: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-harm-reduction-handouts.pdf>
- Please see a list of other available resources at the end of this document.

Additional Updates

- Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has produced 2 new awareness posters: "[Going out safely during COVID-19](#)", including various graphics on assessing levels of risk with everyday activities; and "[Understanding COVID-19 Testing](#)".
- The next version of this bulletin will be distributed on **Friday, September, 4 2020**.

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. **Should you have questions about COVID-19, please do not hesitate to email: sac.cdemergenciasab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca**

OneHealth - <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19>

InfoPoint- By the First Nations Health Managers Association, this site is designed for First Nations health managers in Canada to access credible sources of information and ask questions related to COVID-19. To access this service, call the toll-free number at **1-855-446-2719**, or email InfoPoint@fnhma.ca

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>
- https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17101.aspx?fbclid=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUpo6_wGmSxUc

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>

Indigenous Services Canada COVID-19 Updates available in several Indigenous languages

- <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/enq/1581964230816/1581964277298>
- <https://indigenous.link/indigenous-services-canada/>

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](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx) (AHS) <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx>

Mental health and coping resources are available for individuals who are struggling or need a little extra support.

- The **Alberta Health Services - Indigenous Health Cultural Support Line** provides afterhours support Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 4-8PM. Call toll free at **1-855-735-6766**
- 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.
- Hope for Wellness Help Line [1-855-242-3310](tel:1-855-242-3310), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Kids and teens can call the Kids Help Phone: [1-800-668-6868](tel:1-800-668-6868).
- Text COVID19HOPE to [393939](tel:393939) to subscribe to a free service supporting mental health and wellness in a time of stress and isolation.
- Family Violence Resources: <https://www.alberta.ca/family-violence-prevention-resources.aspx>
- **Text4Hope-Addiction Support** is designed to help Albertans dealing with psychological issues related to addiction. Text "Open2Change" to [393939](tel:393939) to subscribe.

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