

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: May 7, 2020

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

The Government of Alberta has begun a phased relaunch to gradually reopen the province to some businesses and services and get people back to work. This phased relaunch will be done in accordance with all guidelines outlined by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. To be successful, Albertans must stay vigilant to slow the spread of COVID-19, follow public health measures, practice physical distancing and good hygiene, and continue acting responsibly.

Cases and deaths from COVID-19 are still being recorded in Alberta. It is important that all Albertans maintain the health guidelines and protocols put in place as these are essential to protecting Albertans and reducing the severe impact of this illness. Our individual actions are the strongest tool we have to protect ourselves, our loved ones and our health-care system.

Status Update

Number of cases reported*, as of May 7, 2020:

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

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Cases	5,963	63,496
Deaths	112	4,232
Recovered	3,552	28,171

- There are **26** confirmed cases of COVID-19; 3 in South Zone; 4 in North Zone and 19 in Calgary Zone. Several cases have recovered.
- Aggregate data on COVID-19 cases in Alberta is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>.

Testing in Alberta - update

- To date, 40 First Nation communities report testing activities in their communities.
- Alberta is expanding testing capacity by securing additional supplies including swabs and reagents, and taking steps toward achieving continuous testing.
- **Expansion of Testing Criteria** – In order to reinforce the ability to detect new COVID-19 cases, the province is expanding testing eligibility and the list of symptoms that qualify a person for testing, via the [COVID-19 online self-assessment tool](#).
- Individuals who have any of the following symptoms are eligible for testing, and have a legal responsibility to self-isolate for 10 days or until symptoms have resolved; whichever is longer:
 - Fever
 - A new cough or worsening chronic cough
 - New or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Sore throat
 - Stuffy or runny nose



- Individuals who have any of the following symptoms are now also eligible for testing. They do not require self-isolation but are advised to stay home and minimize contact with others until they feel better:
 - Headache
 - Painful swallowing
 - Chills
 - Muscle or joint aches
 - Feeling unwell in general or new fatigue or severe exhaustion
 - Gastrointestinal symptoms including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite
 - Loss of sense of smell or taste
 - Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Additionally, AHS is putting a protocol in place to test all those who are newly-admitted to any Alberta continuing care facility, as well as those who live in these facilities when they are admitted to a hospital or when they are discharged from hospital back to a facility.
- To date, there is no available evidence on the impact of testing asymptomatic individuals.

Current Public Health Actions - update

- Alberta has launched a **voluntary**, secure mobile contact tracing application to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. The [ABTraceTogether](#) app will enhance current manual contact tracing and capacity, and facilitate early detection. More information can be found at [ABTraceTogether](#).
- Alberta is releasing the number of confirmed and recovered cases among health-care workers. This information can be found [here](#).
- Alberta is modifying regulations to allow nurse practitioners to provide expanded care to nursing home residents during COVID-19. These changes will remain in effect until Aug. 14, unless the ministerial order is terminated earlier or the public health emergency is reduced or extended.
- Alberta has issued **new public health orders** to protect Albertans and help prevent the spread of COVID-19:
 - Effective May 4, an order that allows for individual COVID-19 test results to be provided to police if an individual has deliberately put an officer at risk by coughing, sneezing or spitting on the officer.
 - Effective May 4, an order to expand the number of health-care practitioners who are able to assist in contact tracing. Chiropractors, paramedics, respiratory therapists, physiotherapists, psychiatric nurses, LPNs, pharmacists and dental hygienists will now be allowed to perform contact tracing duties after completing training.
 - Effective May 3, an order in respect of the Occupational Health and Safety Code (Code) to approve respiratory protective equipment for required use at Alberta work sites.

Alberta's Relaunch Strategy

- On April 30, 2020, the Government of Alberta announced their relaunch strategy, which focuses on:
 - Protecting the health of all Albertans.
 - Easing restrictions gradually.
 - Protecting high risk groups (e.g. vulnerable due to age, underlying health conditions, remoteness, unstable living space).
 - Ensuring public health capacity remains strong to prepare for and respond to any future waves.
 - Supporting a broad range of economic sectors.
- Alberta's relaunch strategy is to occur in phases, with stage 1 planned for May 14. Each stage of relaunch will depend on keeping infection numbers low.

- To prepare for the first stage of relaunch, these elements must be in place.
 - Enhancing testing capacity.
 - Robust and comprehensive contact tracing, aided by technology, to quickly notify people who may have been exposed.
 - Support for individuals who test positive to enable effective isolation and contain spread.
 - Stronger international border controls and airport screening, especially for international travellers.
 - Rules and guidance for the use of masks in crowded spaces, like mass transit.
 - Strong protections for the most vulnerable, including those in long-term care, continuing care and seniors lodges.
 - Rapid response teams to deal with possible future outbreaks of COVID-19.
- Progression to stage 1 of the relaunch will occur once health measures are achieved to the satisfaction of the government based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- The Government of Alberta has taken some early actions to allow some activities to begin:
 - Alberta Health Services has resumed some scheduled, non-urgent surgeries.
 - Dental and other health-care workers, such as physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, respiratory therapists, audiologists, social workers, occupational therapists, dieticians and more, are allowed to resume services, as long as they are following approved guidelines set by their professional colleges.
 - Access to provincial parks and public lands has re-opened using a phased approach. This action recognizes the role that access to the outdoors and recreation in the outdoors plays to Albertans' sense of well-being.
- **Public health orders** on mandatory isolation, restrictions on mass gatherings, businesses, and restricted access to congregate care facilities **remain in place**.
- **Non-essential travel is not recommended.** Albertans should stay home as much as possible. Further guidance on travel recommendations will be provided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.
- Recommendations on the use of masks and the recommendations for vulnerable individuals to stay at home unless medically necessary **remain in place**.
- Enhanced infection prevention and control measures, including physical distancing requirements of at least 2 metres, will remain in place throughout all stages.
- More information on the phases of the relaunch and key public health measures can be found at [Alberta's relaunch strategy](#) and [Alberta's Safely Staged COVID-19 Relaunch](#)
- Alberta's Relaunch Strategy Guidance documents can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-relaunch-strategy.aspx#guidance>

What the Government of Canada and ISC/FNIHB-AB are doing - update

- FNIHB-AB previous telehealth sessions were recorded and are available at <http://www.fntn.ca>. The next telehealth session will be held on **Thursday May 14, 2020**. Information on how to register will be sent shortly.
- ISC has developed educational videos on physical distancing and how to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These videos are available in several Indigenous languages and can be found on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/user/AANDCanada/videos>.

Mental health and Wellness

- Individuals may be experiencing increased strain on their mental wellbeing as communities deal with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some individuals may be feeling increased fear, anxiety and sadness especially those experiencing grief, illness, loss and financial hardships.
- Getting some exercise and spending time outside is important to mental health. Individuals can enjoy the outdoors while taking all the necessary precautions and following public health orders.
- The Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) mental health counselling benefit provides coverage to support immediate mental health needs for eligible First Nations clients. Clients interested in

telepsychology sessions who are not already seeing a mental health counsellor should contact the NIHB office at 1-800-232-7301 between 8am and 4pm Monday through Friday.

- During normal times, but especially during a global health emergency, care providers working in healthcare, continuing care and other fields focused on caring for others can be vulnerable to burnout and compassion fatigue. For more information on how to prevent compassion fatigue and burnout, go to [Mental Health Moments](#).
- Resources are available if you, or someone you know, is struggling or needs a little extra support. Mental Health resources are also available for Children. These resources can be found through the **OneHealth** website at <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19>.

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>

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

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 Indigenous languages -
<https://www.gotoinfo.ca/ISCInfo>
<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 \(AHS\)](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx) <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx>

Previous information bulletins and additional information and resources for health staff can be found at <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19>

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

- 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.
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17019.aspx>

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

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