

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: September 4, 2020

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

As we enter into this fall season, COVID-19 continues to be with us, and we also know this is the time of year we see increased incidences of other viral infections/influenza. We are taking additional measures this year knowing that both the influenza viruses and COVID-19 have the potential to cause large outbreaks. In the current COVID-19 climate, it is even more important for everyone to get the flu shot to reduce the incidence and/or severity of influenza. Communities are encouraged to start planning their immunization programs to encourage vaccinations; additional information to support this work can be found within this bulletin. [Getting the flu shot](#) is just another important measure we can take to keep ourselves, our families and our communities safe and healthy during this time.

Status Update

Number of cases reported*, as of Sept 4, 2020:

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

Alberta: There are **1,415 active cases** of COVID-19 in Alberta.

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Confirmed Cases	14,310	130,493
Deaths	242	9,141
Recovered	12,653	115,444

First Nations living on reserve in Alberta:

Location (By Zone)	Confirmed Cases	Active Cases	In Hospital	In ICU	Deaths	Recovered
Calgary Zone	55	4	2	1	-	51
South Zone	50	-	-	-	1	49
Central Zone	5	2	-	-	-	3
North Zone	77	20	2	-	-	57
TOTAL	187	26	4	1	1	160

First Nations living on and off reserve (Alberta): There are **483** confirmed cases of COVID-19 to date and **7** deaths in First Nations living on and off reserve in Alberta; **150** in Calgary Zone; **92** in Edmonton Zone; **80** in South Zone; **148** 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 Sept 4, 2020, **39,303** First Nation individuals living in Alberta have been tested.
- **Testing continues to be a powerful tool to help limit the spread and is available to any person with or without symptoms.**



- **[New]** Alberta has implemented a new process to identify **priority** COVID-19 specimens to ensure quick and efficient identification of results. Priority testing categories apply to: symptomatic individuals; outbreak investigations as ordered by Public Health; and, close contacts for contact tracing as ordered by Public Health. Testing sites are to indicate these priority specimens prior to delivery to their corresponding COVID-19 lab for processing.
- **[New]** Albertans aged 14 and up can now access the *MyHealth Records (MHR)* tool to see their **COVID-19 test results**. [Join today](#).
- **Reminder:** Alberta Health recommends against widespread testing of students returning to school at this time, however, students with COVID-19 symptoms should be prioritized. First Nation communities with active COVID-19 cases can discuss asymptomatic testing with ISC-AB Medical Officers of Health (MOHs) and the CDC team.
- 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, also ensure consistent testing continues to occur for those requiring (i.e. with symptoms; contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19). In addition to regular testing services, school staff working on-reserve may access testing off reserve through completing the [AHS Self-Assessment Tool](#).
- 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 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.
- **[New]** Alberta Health Services has launched [a new School COVID-19 webpage \(ahs.ca/covidschools\)](#) with **resources** for schools, teachers, parents and families, including [Managing COVID-19 Cases at School](#) and [Coping and Connection for Children and Families during COVID-19](#).
- **[New]** ISC-AB has developed various resources, including a [School Checklist](#) to support communities planning for in-person school programming on-reserve. Additional resources are available on [OneHealth](#).
- ISC-AB continues to work with Nations and representatives to support the planning and implementation of school re-entry reflective of each Nations' needs. Regular updates on this support, including funding, will continue to be provided. ISC-AB Medical Officers of Health (MOHs) and Environmental Public Health Officers (EPHOs) continue to be available to provide public health support.
- 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 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

- **[New]** ISC-AB is working with First Nation health centers and communities to support the implementation of influenza and pneumococcal **immunization programs this fall** in the midst of COVID-19. Immunization start dates for *Outreach* (long term care, home care clients etc.) is scheduled for Oct 13, 2020; and for *Public* (advertised clinics, etc.) for October 19, 2020. Please contact your local health staff or FNIHB-AB for more information.
- **Reminder:** ISC continues to provide funding to support [access to additional public health measures during COVID-19](#), including **increased surge health staffing capacity** required to support immunizations, testing etc. For more information on this funding and/or to submit a request for funding, please contact your Community Liaison Team member or email: sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca

- ISC [announced](#) an additional influx of **\$305 million** in funding under the previously allocated **Indigenous Community Support Fund** to further support Indigenous leadership with the flexibility to design and implement community-based responses to COVID-19. More details will be shared as soon as they become available.
- **[New]** On Aug 31, 2020 the Government of Canada announced [new measures](#) to ensure the supply of **vaccines and therapies** against COVID-19. An independent task force has also been set up to advise the Government 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](#).
- **[New]** The next Alberta **COVID-19 First Nations Telehealth session** will be held on **September 17, 2020**. Previous telehealth sessions are recorded and are available at: <https://fntn.ca/>.

Mental Health and Wellness- Update

- **[New]** ISC has announced [\\$82.5 million in mental health and wellness funding to support Indigenous communities adapt and expand mental wellness services](#) to address growing demand in the context of the pandemic. This includes, expanding access to culturally appropriate services; adapting mental health services; and, supporting the development of innovative strategies to address substance use and improve access to treatment services. Region-specific funding distribution will be shared as soon as this information becomes available.
- **[New]** Alberta's [Mental Health and Addiction COVID-19 Community Funding Grant 3rd Call for Proposals](#) opens August, 2020 until November 20, 2020 providing up to \$10 million for community initiatives aimed at providing focused, action-oriented mental health and addiction supports and services. First Nations/Indigenous groups are encouraged to apply.
- **[New]** Canada's [Chief Public Health Officer](#) acknowledged **International Overdose Awareness Day** on Aug 31, 2020, noting the importance of working together, as with COVID-19, to prevent overdose deaths and reduce substance-use related harms.
- 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 [here](#).
 - **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.
- Please see a list of other available resources at the end of this document.

Additional Updates

- **[New]** The First Nations Telehealth Network is hosting a **food security session 'Lead, Feed, Share'** with Food Banks Alberta on **Sept 21, 2020** to provide awareness and information on this organization and their supports for food security in First Nation communities. Please register [here](#).
- **[New]** The Indigenous Physicians Association of Canada is producing [COVID-19 PSA videos](#) with impactful messages from Indigenous physicians, residents and medical students across Canada.
- The next version of this bulletin will be distributed on **Friday, September, 18 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.cdemergenciesab-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=IwAR1hzie9aLgDLr0K7Qi80mb9ozNby5dK6VZO3CFhhKgLrALUp06_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.