

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: April 30, 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 global pandemic remains a public health emergency in Alberta. Alberta's aggressive public health measures continue to be implemented to stop the spread of COVID-19.

While we all want to see easing of restrictions and are eager for a return to normalcy, now is not the time to have people moving between communities throughout the province and possibly unknowingly spreading the virus. COVID-19 can only be defeated by our collective efforts to protect each other. Our ability to maintain physical distancing and stop the spread is the key to continuing to flatten the curve and to be able to move forward. Please continue to hold to the measures we need to take together to protect each other.

Status Update

Number of cases reported*, as of April 30, 2020:

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

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Cases	5,165	52,056
Deaths	87	3,082
Recovered	1,953	20,327

- There are **21** cases of COVID-19 identified on-reserve in Alberta - 17 cases in AHS-Calgary zone, two in AHS-South zone, and two in AHS-North zone.
- Aggregate data on COVID-19 cases in Alberta is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>.
- Locations and facility names of acute care, long-term care and continuing care facilities where outbreaks of COVID-19 have occurred can be found at [COVID-19 outbreaks in Alberta](#).
- An outbreak occurs when **one** individual (resident or staff) is laboratory confirmed to have COVID-19. Outbreaks are declared over when 4 weeks have passed with no new cases, so not all outbreaks listed have current transmission happening.
- Alberta released updated modelling data to anticipate the number of COVID-19 cases over the coming months. Updated modelling still suggests that the virus will reach its peak mid-May however scenarios now estimate that less people will require hospitalization when the virus reaches its peak. The new projections show that we are reducing the peak, public health measures are working, and Albertans are doing their part to prevent the spread.
 - Updated modelling and scenarios can be found at [Alberta COVID-19 modelling-April 28](#). Modelling and scenarios will be updated as new data emerges.

Testing in Alberta - update

- To date 39 First Nation communities report testing activities in their communities.
- **Symptomatic individuals living on First Nation reserves are encouraged to get tested.** Testing is available in the communities to any person exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat.



- If you are not sure if your runny nose and cough are caused from seasonal allergies or symptoms of COVID-19, take the online [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) and get tested.
- Alberta has specifically prioritized testing in vulnerable populations, including the homeless population. **Over 1,000** symptomatic individuals experiencing homelessness have been tested to date.

Current Public Health Actions - update

- The list of COVID-19 symptoms has been **expanded** for residents of congregate care facilities. Any resident must be isolated and tested if they show any of the following symptoms: Fever (37.8 °C or higher), Cough, Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, Sore throat, Runny nose, Sneezing, Nasal congestion, Hoarse voice, Difficulty swallowing, and Atypical symptoms (including chills, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue and headache).
- Testing eligibility in continuing care facilities has **expanded** to include asymptomatic staff and residents in any facility where a case of COVID-19 is detected.
- Effective April 28, the operational and outbreak standards for Long Term Care and Supported Living facilities have been **updated** under CMOH Order 12-2020. The updated operational standards can be found at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/cmoh-order-12-2020-2020-covid-19-response>. Facility operators and service providers must follow the outbreak standards to make sure that cases are identified and supported so they can be isolated and to ensure that cases get any health care that they need.
- Effective April 28, the restrictions on visitation in Long Term Care and Supported Living facilities have been **updated** under CMOH Order 14-2020. The updated visitation restrictions can be found at <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/cmoh-order-14-2020-2020-covid-19-response>
- Effective April 26, testing is available to all contacts (both symptomatic and asymptomatic persons) at homeless shelters and in communities that have outbreaks. This step is part of outbreak management to identify cases as quickly as possible and reduce the chance of outbreaks occurring in shelters and similar settings.
- **Public health orders** on mandatory isolation, restrictions on mass gatherings, businesses, and restricted access to congregate care facilities **remain in place**. The restrictions on mass gatherings also apply to all summer events or festivals in Alberta.
- Effective immediately, and until further notice, all FNIHB nurses **must** complete a mandatory, 2-week, at-home self-isolation period prior to travelling to a nursing station in a remote and isolated First Nations community. While self-isolating, nurses will be asked to apply public health measures when engaging with other members of their household.

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

- The Government of Canada has announced temporary salary top-up for low-income essential workers (those who earn less than \$2,500 per month on a full time basis). We will provide you with more information on this as it becomes available.
- The Government of Canada will provide an additional \$25 million to Nutrition North Canada to increase subsidies. The government is extending the list of perishable and non-perishable items subsidized when shipped by air to Nutrition North Canada eligible communities from now until March 31, 2021.
- The Government of Canada announced \$306.8 million in funding to help support small and medium-sized Indigenous businesses, and to support Aboriginal Financial Institutions that offer financing to these businesses. Economic measures will be distributed as follows:
 - Financial support for Indigenous **businesses** will be provided through Aboriginal Financial Institutions, and administered by the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association and the Métis capital corporations in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada.
 - The funding will allow for interest-free loans, as well as non-repayable contributions, to help Indigenous businesses unable to access the government's existing COVID-19 support measures. Additional funding will help Aboriginal Financial Institutions cover operational

expenses, and help the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association increase its operational capacity.

- The National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association is a network of 59 Aboriginal Financial Institutions providing a full range of financial services, loans, and grants to First Nations, Inuit and Métis entrepreneurs to start.
- Employment and Social Development Canada has earmarked \$157.5 million for the Reaching Home initiative to support people across Canada experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. This support can help address needs such as purchasing beds and physical barriers for social distancing and securing accommodation to reduce overcrowding in shelters. Shelters and other non-profit organizations can apply for funding [here](#).
- Statistics Canada is conducting a survey on the Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians. This will provide insight into the challenges Canadians face as the COVID-19 situation evolves in the country; particularly in terms of the current economic and social situation, as well as on people's physical and mental health. Getting information on this topic is vital to effectively assess the needs of communities and implement suitable support. Find the survey [here](#).
- As part of the COVID-19 response plan, ISC-AB Capital Health Facilities team has been reaching out to communities to discuss their health infrastructure needs, and to identify community-specific solutions to support their isolation plans. Funding through the ISC Health Facilities Program is available to support re-tooling and use of existing community spaces (e.g. schools, recreation centres) or the procurement of mobile structures.
- 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 7, 2020**. Information on how to register will be sent shortly.

Guidance on outdoor activities

- With the weather warming up, there are many outdoor activities Albertans can do safely while still following all public health orders. Anyone who is sick or a close contact of a confirmed case **must** remain indoors.
- **Take precautions:** When outdoors in public, take precautions to protect yourself and those around you:
 - Plan your activities with people from your own household or your "cohort family".
 - Plan your activity in advance to ensure physical distancing is possible. If your activity involves a public place:
 - Consider going during non-peak hours.
 - Walk along the sides of trails and other public pathways to maintain distance.
 - Practice good hygiene:
 - Wash your hands frequently.
 - Refrain from touching your face with unclean hands.
 - Carry and use hand sanitizer.
 - Wear a mask in public places to help limit the risk of spread to others if you will be within 2 metres of people other than members of your own household.
- **Assess risk to determine appropriate activities:** To help you plan activities, ask yourself the following questions to determine the risk of particular outdoor activities and whether they're allowed to proceed.
 - Does the activity violate a public health order?
 - Does the activity involve contact with frequently touched surfaces or objects?
 - Can an activity proceed with physical distancing in place?

Flooding Situation

- The situation in the North Zone continues to rapidly evolve with mandatory evacuations of specific areas related to seasonal flooding. Mandatory and voluntary evacuations have been ordered in a number of communities due to overland flooding from ice jams and spring run-off. Mandatory evacuation orders are in place for areas within Fort McMurray and Fort Vermilion.

- Emergency management teams continue to adapt evacuation plans for COVID-19 physical distancing and isolation needs. This includes arranging for safe locations to register as evacuees during this time of COVID-19.
- Public health measures including required physical distancing are being shared with evacuees, and followed at evacuation centres.
- ISC-AB is tracking communities with **flooding and risk of flooding**, scheduling and prioritizing inspection of facilities to ensure emergency preparedness and response plans and measures are in place. For any questions please email sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca.

Food Security

- Many communities are continuing to feed their Nations' children at this time through adapting their school meal programs. PC Children's Charity School Nutrition Grant applications are now open for the 2020-2021 school year. Applications received before May 30th will be notified by June 15th and applications received after May 30th will be reviewed and notified monthly. There is no deadline to apply. To learn more about the grant, visit <https://www.pcchildrenscharity.ca/grants-for-school-nutrition/>
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has a funding initiative to support Indigenous Agriculture and Food Systems. Eligible activities are categorized into two streams: Community readiness and pre-development support activities; and supporting Indigenous agriculture and food systems projects. This funding is open until **September 30, 2022**. For more information about this funding initiative visit [Indigenous Agriculture and Food Systems Initiative](#).
- If you are seeking additional funding for your food distribution activities, Breakfast Club of Canada is issuing special grants for community organizations to help ensure children and families have access to food during the crisis. To learn more about their COVID Special Grants, visit <https://www.breakfastclubcanada.org/covid-special-grant-application/>

Mental health and Wellness

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created a higher sense of stress and anxiety for all people in Canada. While it's normal to worry in uncertain times, heightened levels of stress or worry may impact our mental health.
- 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.
- Many Albertans work in healthcare, continuing care and other fields focused on caring for others. During normal times, but especially during a global health emergency, care providers can be vulnerable to burnout and compassion fatigue. For more information on how to prevent compassion fatigue and burnout, go to [Mental Health Moments](#) for this week's Mental Health Moment.
- Resources are also 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> or in weekly bulletins.

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>

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>

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

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