

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: April 03, 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 continues to see an increase in the number of cases of COVID-19 and the situation is evolving daily.

Status Update

Number of cases reported*, as of April 03, 2020:

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

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Cases	968	11,268
Deaths	13	138
Recovered	174	1,744

- There are identified cases of COVID-19 in all Alberta Health zones: Calgary zone (**589**); Edmonton zone (**247**); Central zone (**59**); South zone (**14**); North zone (**55**) and Unknown (**4**).
- COVID-19 affects people of all ages. In Alberta there are over 75 COVID-19 cases in youth between the ages of 1 and 24. Over half of these cases are people between the ages of 15 and 24 and a death has occurred in a man in his 30s in Alberta from COVID-19.
- There has been **no confirmed case** of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta to date
- Aggregate data on COVID-19 cases and laboratory testing in Alberta is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>.

Testing in Alberta - update

- Alberta's targeted approach to testing for COVID-19 prioritizes at-risk populations and those at the highest risk of local exposure. This approach is consistent with testing happening across Canada.
- Testing is prioritized for the following individuals, if they are symptomatic:
 - People who **are hospitalized** with respiratory illness.
 - Residents of **continuing care and other similar facilities**.
 - People who **returned from travelling abroad between March 8 and March 12** (before the self-isolation protocols were in place).
 - **Health-care workers** with respiratory symptoms. An online [Healthcare Worker Self – Assessment tool](#) has been developed for all healthcare workers that think they may have COVID-19 or may have been exposed to COVID-19.
- FNIHB recognizes the importance of increasing COVID-19 testing in Alberta First Nations. Efforts are underway to finalize measures to support appropriate testing in communities for the early detection of COVID-19 cases. Testing in communities will continue to be a collaboration between local physicians and nurse practitioners, FNIHB MOH, and nurses in the community.
- Anyone who is waiting for their COVID-19 test results is **required** to remain in self-isolation, at home. While at home, individuals are advised to continue to follow good respiratory etiquette, and good hand hygiene practices.



Current Public Health Actions - update

- Alberta implemented **public health orders** restricting mass gatherings, certain businesses and workplace closures to protect the health of Albertans and limit the spread of COVID-19. **New restrictions** on mass gatherings and businesses are now in place to limit the spread of COVID-19. **Mass gatherings must now be limited to no more than 15 attendees.**
- Law enforcement agencies continue to have full authority to enforce public health orders and issue fines for violations.
- **Public health orders** issued by the Chief Medical officer of Health remain in place. These orders **legally require** returning international travelers, close contact of confirmed cases, and people exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms to self-isolate.
- Exemptions will continue to be assessed on a case-by-case basis by public health officials.

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

- ISC-AB, through the Emergency Management Assistance Program, provided each First Nation in Alberta with initial Response and Recovery funding allocations of \$125,000 each to support emergency management and planning needs.
- First Nations in Alberta will also be receiving a total of \$26,267,000 of the \$305 million Indigenous Community Response Fund. Letters were sent to all Chiefs and Councils in Alberta on March 28, 2020 confirming funding allocation. Individual Nation's allocation will be sent in the coming weeks.
- FNIHB-AB previous telehealth sessions were recorded and are available at <http://www.fntn.ca>. The next telehealth session will be held on **Thursday April 9, 2020**. The topic for the next session as well as information on how to register will be sent shortly.

Guidance for appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Health care workers must use appropriate PPE when providing direct care (i.e. within 6 feet) for individuals with symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, sneezing, runny nose).
- PPE is not required for employees or visitors of healthcare facilities that do not perform direct patient care. Activities that do not involve contact with individuals with respiratory symptoms do not require the use of PPE.
- Masks should be worn by:
 - Persons with symptoms of respiratory illness when they are required to go out in a public setting, this will prevent the spread of germs.
 - Individuals providing personal care at home (within 6 feet) for individuals who have symptoms of respiratory illness.
- People who do not have any symptoms of respiratory illness do not need to wear a mask.
- Masks are only effective if used properly. Properly discarding the masks and hand hygiene are important, if not done correctly, germs on the mask can be a source of infection.

Mandatory Self-Isolation - update

- Mandatory self-isolation is still **legally required** for individuals who have recently returned from international travel; individuals who are a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19; Albertans with symptoms of COVID-19 that is not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition; and Albertans who test positive for COVID-19.
 - Individuals under mandatory self-isolation **who do not show symptoms** must self-isolate for 14 days.
 - Individuals **who show symptoms** must self-isolate for an additional 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or until they are feeling well, **whichever takes longer**.
- A Public Health directive has been issued for individuals **in mandatory self-isolation**:
 - **Stay home** – do not leave your home or attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings.
 - Avoid close contact with people in your household, especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems.
 - You are **prohibited** from taking public transportation like buses, taxis or ride-sharing.

- **Do not go outside for a walk** through your neighbourhood or park. This includes children in mandatory self-isolation.
- You can get fresh air in your backyard, if you have one, **but you must remain on private property not accessible by others.**
- If you live in an apartment building or high-rise, you must stay inside and cannot use the elevators or stairwells to go outside. If your balcony is private and at least 2 metres away from your closest neighbour's, you may go outside on the balcony
- For **more information** on self-isolation please go to <https://www.alberta.ca/self-isolation.aspx>

Mass Gatherings, Business and Workplace restrictions – update

- Exemptions to the current mass gathering restrictions of **no more than 15 people** includes:
 - Public transit – if 2 metres (about the length of a hockey stick) of physical distancing is observed.
 - Operators of shelters and temporary or transitional housing facilities may provide shelter to more than 15 people but **risk mitigation strategies must be followed**, including maintaining 2 metres of physical distancing.
 - All non-essential gatherings inside and outside these facilities must include no more than 15 people.
 - Risk mitigation strategies can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-mass-gatherings-fact-sheet.pdf>.
- Businesses and services on the essential services list can continue to provide services at locations accessible to the public, **but** they must have proper risk mitigation measures in place, such as sanitation stations and appropriate distancing between customers.
- List of retailers that can remain operational with appropriate public health measures in place are identified at <https://www.alberta.ca/essential-services.aspx>.
- Non-essential retail businesses are **prohibited** from offering services in a location accessible to the public.
- Businesses or workplaces are **prohibited** from offering close contact personal services, including personal services facilities, cosmetic enhancement services, wellness studios and clinics, non-emergency and non-critical health services
- **Violation of the public health order is subject to a substantial fine.**

Information for Youth

- There is a growing concern from Chiefs in the Alberta Region that Indigenous youth are not heeding to public health messaging regarding physical distancing, not unlike youth across the country.
- All Albertans including the youth **MUST** take personal steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. These are some actions the youth can take:
 - Practice physical distancing – stay at least 2 meters or 6 feet away from other people if you need to leave your home.
 - Stay home – don't go out unless absolutely necessary.
 - Wash your hands with soap and water often.
 - Protect the elders and elderly by respecting and following the public health measures.
 - Don't share cigarettes, cannabis or vaping devices from mouth to mouth. Vaping and smoking can weaken the lungs and make them more susceptible to respiratory disease.
 - Don't consume food or drinks from common containers – stop passing the bottle around or sharing food.

Preventing the Spread

Physical distancing

- All Albertans are asked to practice physical distancing to help protect themselves and limit the spread of COVID-19.
- Physical distancing is not the same as self-isolation. It involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with and can help you reduce the risk of getting sick.

- To protect yourself and others:
 - Keep at least 6 feet (about the length of a hockey stick) from others when going out for groceries, medical trips and other essential needs
 - Limit the number of times you leave your home for errands
 - Try to shop at less busy times
 - Order online to have groceries or other items delivered if possible
 - Go for a walk in your neighbourhood or park while maintaining distance from others
 - Avoid overcrowding in elevators or other enclosed spaces
 - Follow Alberta's mandatory restrictions on mass gatherings
 - Wash or sanitize your hands after touching communal surfaces. Protect your loved ones by practicing physical distancing. We all have a role to play!

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-mhpip-disaster-pandemic-covid-19-and-your-mental-health.pdf> and <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mhpip-disaster-pandemic-practical-and-emotional-preparedness.pdf>
 - To learn more about coping and connections for children and families during COVID-19 please go to <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mhpip-disaster-pandemic-coping-for-children-families.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.
 - 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.

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>

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/enq/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/opdashboard/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 health advice.

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