

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: April 09, 2020

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

Please email questions about COVID-19 to: [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)

The COVID-19 global pandemic remains a public health emergency in Alberta as the province continues to see an increase in the number of cases of COVID-19. Public health measures are in place to quickly identify potential cases; however it takes more than actions from governments and the health sector to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Everyone has a role to play and all Albertans must take personal steps to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

### Status Update

Number of cases reported\*, as of April 09, 2020:

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

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Cases	1,423	19,291
Deaths	29	435
Recovered	519	4,653

- There are identified cases of COVID-19 in all Alberta Health zones: Calgary zone (860); Edmonton zone (368); Central zone (72); South zone (26); North zone (95) and Unknown (2).
- COVID-19 affects people of all ages. Young people are also getting sick from COVID-19. In Alberta the number of COVID-19 cases in youth between the ages of 1 and 24 is also increasing and there has been a death in a woman in her 20s and a man in his 30s in Alberta from COVID-19.
- Aggregate data on COVID-19 cases in Alberta is available at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-alberta-data.aspx>.
- There has been **no confirmed case** of COVID-19 in First Nations communities in Alberta to date.
- Alberta released modelling data to anticipate the number of COVID-19 cases over the coming months. The data helps with decision-making and preparation of hospitals to care for very sick patients. Modelling and scenarios can be found at [Alberta COVID-19 modelling](#) and will be updated as new data emerges.
  - The model for a 'most probable' scenario in Alberta is based on the experience of other countries and what we know in Alberta today. The model suggests the virus will reach its peak mid-May. This data is intended to demonstrate expected trends, and not intended to predict daily increases in hospital admission rates.

### Testing in Alberta - update

- 65,762 people have been tested so far for COVID-19 in Alberta. Alberta has one of the highest testing rates in the world; completing as many tests as possible, while being purposeful in testing. The high numbers of testing is being done in order to:
  - Diagnose and treat individuals at greatest risk.
  - Trace the spread of the virus so we can identify steps to limit the spread.
  - Determine how well our public health measures are working.
- Alberta's targeted approach to testing for COVID-19 prioritizes at-risk populations and those at the highest risk of local exposure. Testing has also expanded to reflect enhanced lab testing capacity, and the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Categories of individuals tested may



- change in the coming weeks and months to reflect the evolving pandemic.
- Alberta is testing those at greatest risk of severe illness, including anyone:
    - Who is in hospital with a respiratory illness.
    - Living in continuing care facilities, group homes or other similar congregate settings with symptoms of COVID-19.
    - Aged 65 years or older with symptoms of COVID-19.
  - Testing is also being offered to symptomatic individuals in the following roles:
    - Healthcare workers.
    - Group home workers and shelter workers.
    - First responders, including firefighters and EMS.
    - People involved in COVID-19 enforcement, including police, peace officers, bylaw officers, environmental health officers, and fish and wildlife officers.
    - Correctional facility staff, working in either a provincial or federal facility.
    - Any individual in one of the above mentioned roles who has symptoms of COVID-19 should complete the [COVID-10 self-assessment for healthcare and shelter workers, enforcement personnel and first responders](#) to determine if you need to be tested.
  - Testing is also expanding to include symptomatic individuals who are:
    - Residents of the Calgary Zone.
    - Essential Service workers.
    - Living with a person who is 65 and older.
    - These individuals listed above should complete the online [COVID-19 self-assessment](#).
  - **Symptomatic individuals living on First Nation reserves and Metis settlement will be tested.**
  - Anyone who is waiting for their COVID-19 test results is required to remain in self-isolation, at home.

### **Current Public Health Actions - update**

- Public health orders on mandatory isolation and restrictions on mass gatherings and businesses remain in place.
- ISC national directives requires all healthcare professionals who are employed or contracted by ISC to self-screen daily for symptoms and exposure of COVID-19 virus while on assignment into First Nations. FNIHB-AB staff members are required to complete a daily self-assessment to ensure person and community member safety.
- To prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, among seniors and vulnerable groups, **no visitors are allowed** entry to continuing care facilities and residential addiction treatment centres except:
  - When a resident is dying.
  - Where, in rare situations, the resident's care needs cannot be met without their assistance.
- Alberta is providing a toll-free line for Congregate Living Settings. Operators are asked to call 1-844-343-0971 if:
  - A resident or staff has influenza-like or COVID symptoms; or,
  - Assistance or guidance is needed in managing symptomatic residents or staff.
- Law enforcement agencies continue to have full authority to enforce public health orders and issue fines for violations.

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

- The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) portal opened on April 6, 2020. CERB may be able to support community members who have stopped working because of COVID-19. It provides \$500 a week for up to 16 weeks. To see who is eligible and to apply, please visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html>.
- The Government of Canada has announced a call for proposals to allow Indigenous organizations providing services to Indigenous peoples in urban centres or off reserve to access funding from the Indigenous Community Support Fund to prepare for and react to the spread of COVID-19. The **deadline to submit an application is April 13, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time**. More

information on who can apply, how to apply, and selection criteria can be found at <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1585928331845/1585928356443>.

- ISC-AB has established Mobile Nursing Assessment and Support Teams to support communities in developing their screening, assessment and testing plans and processes. These teams are composed of FNIHB-employed nurses and will be deployed on an as needed basis.
- ISC-AB has launched Community Liaison Teams. Each community will have two community liaisons, one representing Regional Operations and another representing First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, who will work harmoniously to offer a single window into ISC for community dialogue regarding operational matters related to COVID-19.
- ISC-AB is receiving \$1.37 million, which will be flowed to on-reserve women's emergency shelters to manage or prevent an outbreak in their facilities.
- 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 16, 2020**. The topic for the next session as well as information on how to register will be sent shortly.
- Onehealth now has a publically accessible site <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19> where the weekly *Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta* and other useful resources and information can be found.
- Essential services provided by Indigenous Services Canada will continue during the COVID-19 outbreak. For more information on the essential services please visit <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298>.

### **Use of Masks – update**

- Medical masks, including surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators (like N95 masks), **must** be kept for health care workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients.
- Wearing a non-medical mask, such as a homemade cloth mask, **has not been proven** to protect the person wearing it. Adhering to strict good hygiene practices and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical distancing, will reduce your chance of being exposed to the virus and prevent the spread of infection.
- Wearing a non-medical mask is an additional measure you can take to protect others around you, even if you have no symptoms.
  - Wearing a non-medical mask is another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent your respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces. Just like the recommendations not to cough into your hands (instead, cover your cough with tissues or your sleeve), a mask can reduce the chance that others are coming into contact with your respiratory droplets.
  - It can be useful for short periods of time, when physical distancing is not possible in public settings such as when grocery shopping or using public transit.
  - Wearing a mask may stop you from touching your nose and mouth but remember not to touch or rub your eyes.
- **Non-medical masks have limitations and need to be used safely.** If you choose to use a non-medical face mask:
  - You must wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (in addition to practicing good hand hygiene while wearing it).
  - It should fit well (non-gaping).
  - You should not share it with others.
- Face masks can become contaminated on the outside, or when touched by your hands. When wearing a mask, take the following precautions to protect yourself:
  - Avoid touching your face mask while using it.
  - Change a cloth mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled.
    - Put it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine and then disposed of.
    - Cloth masks can be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly.

- Non-medical masks that cannot be washed should be discarded and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled.
  - Dispose of masks properly in a lined garbage bin.
  - Do not leave discarded masks in shopping carts, on the ground, etc.

### **Disclosure of Patient Health Information**

- There is currently no confirmed case of COVID19 in First Nations communities in Alberta. The regional executive will notify leadership when a case is present in the community.
- FNIHB-AB staff and community staff who are regulated members of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta (CARNA) are responsible and accountable for ensuring they follow all relevant legislation, regulation, and policies, and understand the privacy requirements that apply to their nursing practice.
- All information related to an individual who is or was infected with a communicable disease shall be treated as private and confidential, and no information shall be published, released or disclosed in any manner that would be detrimental to the personal interest, reputation or privacy of that individual.
- Regulated members must collect, use and disclose only health information that is essential for the intended purpose, and with the highest degree of confidentiality possible. Any inappropriate access or disclosure of personal or health information of an individual receiving care may constitute a privacy breach.
- Regulated members can seek guidance from their custodians of health information (the Medical Officers of Health) to ensure they know the policies and procedures regarding collection, use, disclosure and security of health information.
- In situations where regulated members are self-employed or employed to provide health services by other organizations such as private industry or clinics, corporations, and educational institutions, it is the regulated members who are the custodians of health information.
- Information on regulated member responsibility can be found in the Privacy and Management of Health Information Standards (2020). Regulated members can also direct questions to the Office of Information and Privacy Commissioner at [www.oipc.ab.ca](http://www.oipc.ab.ca).

### **Enforcement of the Public Health Orders**

- Part III of the *Public Health Act* addresses Communicable Disease and Public Health Emergencies. Where **non-compliance** of public health orders is observed in Nations, the process utilized of public health officers is as follows:
  1. The community health nurse is to speak to the non-compliant individual(s) to communicate the importance of following the Public Health measures.
  2. If the individual(s) continues to be non-compliant, the community health nurse contacts the MOH to request a letter be sent to the individual(s) further communicating the importance of the directive and compliance.
  3. If non-compliance continues, the MOH will issue a Certificate/Order under the *Public Health Act* to obtain compliance as a last resort. Non-compliance with the issued certificate can result in enforcement options that include applicable authorities (First Nations Community Peace Officer, Security entities or the RCMP) to ensure isolation and community protection according to the public health directive.

### **Preventing the Spread**

#### **Cleaning**

- Coronaviruses are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the appropriate disinfectant product when used according to the label directions.
- Health Canada recommends cleaning high-touch surfaces often, using either regular household cleaners or diluted bleach. Health Canada has published a [list of hard surface disinfectants](#) that are likely to be effective for use against COVID-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>

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

**Alberta Health Services** – novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

<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>

**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)

**Johns Hopkins University Interactive Dashboard** –

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

**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.

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

**Should you have questions about COVID-19, please do not hesitate to email:**

[sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)