

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: April 16, 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 16, 2020:

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

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Cases	1,996	28,381
Deaths	48	954
Recovered	914	8,970

- There are identified cases of COVID-19 in all Alberta Health zones: Calgary zone (**1242**); Edmonton zone (**402**); Central zone (**74**); South zone (**36**); North zone (**107**) and Unknown (**9**).
- 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.

Testing in Alberta - update

- 85,502 people have been tested so far for COVID-19 in Alberta. Alberta has one of the highest testing rates in the world.
- Alberta has expanded access to laboratory tests to better trace the spread of COVID-19. Effective April 14th, testing is available to **any individual with COVID-19 symptoms**: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat.
- **Symptomatic individuals living on First Nation reserves will be tested.**
- To determine if you need to be tested and next steps, complete the:
 - [COVID-19 self-assessment for Albertans](#), or the
 - [COVID-19 self-assessment for healthcare and shelter workers, enforcement personnel and first responders](#).
- Anyone who is waiting for their COVID-19 test results is required to remain in self-isolation, at home.
- Individuals being tested for COVID-19 have the option to receive their negative COVID-19 test results over the phone through an auto-dialer system. All Albertans who receive negative results are advised to visit ahs.ca/results for additional important direction on steps they still need to take to continue to keep themselves and their families healthy.
- Individuals living on First Nation reserves who test positive for COVID-19 will be contacted by the Public Health Nurse for follow-up, case and contact management.



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Current Public Health Actions - update

- Workers in long-term care and designated supportive living sites will only be allowed to **work at one location**. This is to prevent the spread of illness between facilities. This requirement must be fully implemented no later than April 23. Physicians and Nurse Practitioners are exempt from this order.
- All workers in **continuing care** facilities will be **required to wear surgical or procedure masks at all times** when providing direct patient care or working in patient care areas within two meters of others to protect residents and staff from exposure to COVID-19 through asymptomatic individuals.
- Continuous masking protects patients from inadvertent exposure from a healthcare worker who could be without symptoms, but still infectious. Continuous masking will also minimize the risk of an asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic health care worker exposing other workers to COVID-19.
- Healthcare workers who do not work in patient care areas or have direct patient contact are only required to mask if social distancing cannot be maintained in the workplace or if entry into patient care areas is required.
- **Public health orders** on mandatory isolation, restrictions on mass gatherings, businesses, and restricted access to congregate care facilities remain in place. For the most current list of restrictions, please refer to <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>
- Law enforcement agencies continue to have full authority to enforce public health orders and issue fines for violations.
- If you are concerned someone is not following the public health orders about gatherings or isolation:
 - Remind the person that not following public health orders is against the law and puts people at risk.
 - Submit a complaint to AHS public health inspectors at: <https://ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case/> or call 1 833 415 9179 and leave a message.
 - Submit **one** complaint, **either** online **or** by phone.
- Alberta Wildfire is invoking fire restrictions, fire bans and implementing off-highway vehicle (OHV) restrictions to prepare for the upcoming **wildfire season** during COVID-19. For more information on fire restrictions, fire bans, OHV restrictions and general wildfire information please visit albertafirebans.ca or call 1-866-FYI-FIRE (1-866-394-3473). To report a wildfire, call 310-FIRE (310-3473) toll-free, from anywhere in Alberta.

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

- The Government of Canada passed Bill C-14, **COVID-19 Emergency Response Act, No. 2** which includes additional flexibilities for employers. Full details can be found [here](#).
- ISC-FNIHB-AB is providing support to Nations who have developed, are working to develop, or require support to develop an isolation/accommodation plan for their Nations' members. If your Nation wishes to connect regarding additional health infrastructure needed for COVID-19 response, please send a request to sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca
- ISC-AB's Environmental Public Health Officers continue to provide support to First Nations across Alberta. This support includes help with planning, preparations and assessment of **isolation facilities** as well as various duties related to drinking water.
- 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 23, 2020**. Information on how to register will be sent shortly.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – update

- First Nations can submit requests to AHS zones for health care workers' PPE supply.
- ISC National Office maintains a stockpile of PPE and hand sanitizers for use in Indigenous communities in the event of a health emergency. ISC-AB works with the National Office on PPE community health care requests.
- **Ensuring the appropriate use of PPE, including surgical or procedure masks, in your community will help to keep everyone safe by ensuring that those that need it have an adequate supply to ensure their safety while providing care or services in the community.**

- Healthcare workers should always follow guidelines on the use of appropriate PPE per the guidelines available here: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-assmt-cntrs-covid-ppe-matrix-res-topics-z0-emerging-issues.pdf>
- Non-healthcare workers in community, such as people delivering food/items to households, water truck drivers, social workers and others should follow risk-informed decision making and continue to adhere to the most current [Public Health advice](#).
- Medical facemasks, including surgical, medical procedure facemasks and respirators (N95 facemasks), must be kept for healthcare workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients.
- N95 masks are **only required** for aerosol generating medical procedures (e.g. intubation, manual ventilation etc.) and are **not necessary** in most cases, even in health-care environments. Nurses **do not need** N95 respirators to perform nasopharyngeal swabs for COVID-19 testing, as this is not an aerosol generating procedure. To protect themselves while performing swabs, specimens should be collected using droplet and contact precautions which include: gown, gloves, protective eye wear/face shield (personal eye glasses are not sufficient) and a surgical or procedure mask.
- PPE is critical to the health and safety of all healthcare workers, as well as the patients being cared for. Please **do not bring** your own PPE to work, and be advised of significant risks of relying on potentially fraudulent PPE. For more information, please read the [Health Canada advisory](#).

Who is at risk of serious illness?

- We are still learning about COVID-19, however confirmed cases have shown COVID-19 affects people of all age groups. There are reported cases among children and adolescents and even higher numbers in older adults. Certain individuals have a higher risk of severe illness, and account for a higher proportion of hospitalized cases and deaths, and need to be protected from exposure:
 - Elderly patients.
 - Individuals with certain chronic health conditions e.g. heart and lung disease, and diabetes.
 - Individuals on medications that affect their immune system, e.g. corticosteroids, certain chemotherapy treatments, and some other medications that are used for autoimmune diseases (like rheumatoid arthritis, lupus).
 - Smokers are also likely to be at somewhat higher risk.

Planning for a COVID-19 outbreak in your community

- Collaborate, share information, and review **emergency plans** with community leaders and public health authorities (ISC-FNIHB-AB) to ensure measures are in place to help protect staff and members of the community.
- Work with community leaders and public health authorities in advance to **secure additional shelter spaces** in order to accommodate the requirements of physical distancing. Consider cohorting those who have symptoms compatible with COVID-19 (even mild), are awaiting results of a lab test for COVID-19, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Those with severe symptoms (see below) should be transported via emergency medical services (EMS) to a health care facility.
- Plan to have **appropriate PPE supplies** for those who are providing direct care to those who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (even mild). ISC-FNIHB-AB can provide advice on the need for and use of PPE. For those who are not providing direct care to ill clients, ensure that information on wearing non-medical masks or face coverings is available.
- **Transportation** of clients (e.g. for non-essential medical appointments) should be temporarily **suspended** in the context of the outbreak.
- Have a plan in place to access and maintain supplies to **support environmental cleaning**.
- Develop flexible **attendance and sick-leave policies**. Staff (and volunteers) may need to stay home when they are sick or caring for a sick household member. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff members, identifying short-term volunteers and surge staff.

- Ensure that staff and/or clients are aware of financial and other support programs available to support those with financial instability related to COVID-19 (e.g. for those who are not able to work due to illness/exposure, isolation/self-isolation, or loss of job/income).
- Help **counter stigma and discrimination** in your community. Speak out against negative behaviors toward those who may experience stigma.

Mental health and Wellness

- ISC Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program's Mental Health Counselling (MHC) benefit is intended to provide coverage for professional mental health counselling to complement other mental wellness services that may be available, including telepsychology sessions.
- Members of Nations that are not currently seeing a mental health counsellor and are interested in this service should call [1-800-232-7301](tel:1-800-232-7301) between 8am and 4pm Monday through Friday to receive assistance with connecting to a provider and arranging a first session.
- Psychosocial, peer and community supports, are currently available through the toll-free caregiver advisor line at [1-877-453-5088](tel:1-877-453-5088) and online at caregiversalberta.ca for all caregivers, including those caring for someone with COVID-19 or in self-isolation.
- Resources are available for kids who are facing a lot of changes and uncertainty. Resources are also available if you, or someone you know, is struggling or needs a little extra support.
 - Mental Health for Children
 - A new fact sheet is available online at Alberta.ca/COVID19. It is aimed at kids and their families and is meant to spur open, honest conversations with kids about coronavirus and the measures being taken to prevent the spread.
 - COVID-19 Book for Children https://660919d3-b85b-43c3-a3ad-3de6a9d37099.filesusr.com/ugd/64c685_319c5acf38d34604b537ac9fae37fc80.pdf
 - World Health Organization Healthy Parenting <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/healthy-parenting>
 - Helping Children Cope with Stress During the 2019-nCoV Outbreak (WHO) https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2
 - Family Violence Resources <https://www.alberta.ca/family-violence-prevention-resources.aspx>.
 - CPIP Annex: Pandemic Influenza Psychosocial Annex <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/flu-influenza/canadian-pandemic-influenza-preparedness-planning-guidance-health-sector/pandemic-influenza-psychosocial-annex.html>
 - Coping with Stress During the 2019-nCoV Outbreak (WHO) https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/coping-with-stress.pdf?sfvrsn=9845bc3a_2
 - Psychological First Aid After a Disaster or Emergency (AHS) <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/mh/hi-amh-prov-mhpi-pfa-after-a-disaster.pdf>
 - Resources for Responding to Emergencies and Disasters (Canadian Psychological Association) <http://www.cpa.ca/public/emergencies/Resources>

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>

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>

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>

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 is available 24/7 to provide advice and referrals to community supports near you.
- Hope for Wellness Help Line 1-855-242-3310, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>
- Kids and teens can call the Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868.
- Text COVID19HOPE to 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.

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