

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: April 23, 2020

Office of the Senior Medical Officer of Health

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

The first case of COVID-19 in Alberta was reported seven weeks ago, yet the global pandemic remains a public health emergency in Alberta. Alberta's public health response is succeeding in the efforts to lower the spread of the COVID-19 in comparison to predicted models; however COVID-19 cases continue to be reported and there is still a potential for rapid spread. Aggressive public health measures continue to be implemented to stop the spread of COVID-19 and Albertans must remain vigilante and keep following public health orders.

Status Update

Number of cases reported*, as of April 23, 2020:

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

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)
Cases	3,401	40,190
Deaths	66	1,974
Recovered	1,310	13,986

- There are identified cases of COVID-19 in all Alberta Health zones: Calgary zone (**2,396**); Edmonton zone (**451**); Central zone (**79**); South zone (**303**); North zone (**150**) and Unknown (**20**).
- There is one confirmed case of COVID-19 in one First Nations community in Alberta.
- 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 will be posted publicly. An outbreak occurs when there are two or more cases. Find the list of [COVID-19 outbreaks in Alberta](#) by health zone; updated on Tuesday and Friday each week.

Testing in Alberta - update

- 113,499 tests have been completed so far for COVID-19 in Alberta.
 - **424** tests have been completed from 34 First Nation communities that are testing.
- Testing is available to any person exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat. Albertans are encouraged to get tested if they show symptoms. Alberta's testing rate continues to be one of the highest in the world and Alberta has the capacity for more testing.
- It is allergy season and if you are not sure if your runny nose and cough are caused from snow mold or symptoms of COVID-19, take the online [COVID-19 self-assessment](#) **AND** get tested.
- **Symptomatic individuals living on First Nation reserves are encouraged to get tested.**
- MyAHS Connect is a free, secure, online tool that lets you see some of your Alberta Health Services' (AHS) health information. Individuals who already have access to their MyAHS Connect account can view their COVID-19 results in the "Test Results" section of the portal. More information can be found at [MyAHSConnect](#).



Current Public Health Actions - update

- To protect the most vulnerable Albertans, contractors operating within a designated supportive living and long-term care **must** restrict the movement of staff members among healthcare facilities by ensuring that each staff member works in only one healthcare facility.
- The Chief Medical Officer of Health can now require health care facility operators to share information necessary to restrict staff from working at more than one facility.
- To prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, among seniors and vulnerable groups in congregate care facilities:
 - Operators must advise all residents that they are required to conduct daily self-checks (like all Albertans), for signs of COVID-19.
 - Operator must advise staff that they are required to conduct twice daily self-checks (like all Albertans) for signs of COVID-19, for their own health as well as prior to coming to work.
- A **new public health order** establishes rules for responding to a suspected, probable or confirmed outbreak of COVID-19 in congregate care facilities. These rules apply to: operators, service providers, staff, residents and essential visitors. More information can be found [here](#).
- Outbreak control measures are in place where there is a single confirmed case of COVID-19 in a congregate care facility, as a precaution. Operators and service providers must follow the [outbreak control standards](#) if an outbreak occurs.
- All essential workers in Alberta will be able to access child care services. More information can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/child-care-during-covid-19.aspx>

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

- The Government of Canada has announced changes to the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) to include boosts for essential workers as well as inclusion of seasonal workers and those who have exhausted their EI benefits. Full details on the expanded access to this benefit can be found [here](#).
- The Government of Canada has 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. We will provide you with more information on this funding as it becomes available.
- The Government of Canada is increasing the Canada Child Benefit, providing up to an extra \$300 per child through the Canada Child Benefit (CCB) for 2019-20. This benefit will be delivered as part of the scheduled CCB payment in May. If you already receive the CCB you do not need to re-apply.
- The Government of Canada has announced a series of measures as part of its COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan to help Canadian students and recent graduates significantly affected by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) will provide support to students and new graduates who are not be eligible for the Canada Emergency Response Benefit or Employment Insurance or unable to work due to COVID-19. This benefit would provide \$1,250 per month for eligible students or \$1,750 per month for eligible students with dependents or disabilities. This benefit would be available from May to August 2020.
 - The Government of Canada is providing \$75.2 million in additional distinctions-based support for First Nations, Inuit, and Metis Nation postsecondary students.
 - Information on other measures to support students and recent graduates can be found at [Support for Students and Recent Graduates Impacted by COVID-19](#).
- As part of the COVID-19 response plan, ISC's networks of women's emergency shelters on reserve are receiving extra funds to manage or prevent an outbreak in their facilities. As a reminder,
- 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 30, 2020**. Information on how to register will be sent shortly.
- ISC-AB is tracking communities with flooding and risk of flooding to ensure emergency preparedness and response plans are in place and fund eligible flood mitigation preparedness and response measures.

Disclosure of Personal Health Information

- The collection, use and disclosure of personal health information is governed under Alberta's Health Information Act. This Act identifies the very specific parameters under which health information can be shared and with whom. Unless otherwise identified in the Act, community health nurses only share personally identifiable health information with other health providers providing direct care to the specific client. This is referred to as the "circle of care" and only those in it should have access to personal health information.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – update

- AHS continuous masking strategy in healthcare setting is still in place.
- First Nations can submit requests to AHS zones for health care workers' PPE supply.
- Product concerns with personal protective equipment supplied should be emailed to ppe@ahs.ca.
- For all non-Health related PPE orders please go to <https://www.alberta.ca/ppe-request>.

Use of Face Masks

- COVID-19 is rapidly evolving and as such, public health guidance related to COVID-19 continues to change.
- Masks help prevent those infected, but not yet sick, from spreading the virus to others.
- While wearing a homemade face mask in the community does not protect those wearing it, it can act as an additional measure that individuals can take to protect others around them when physical distancing is not possible.
- Wearing a homemade face mask in the community needs to be done in addition to other public health measures.
- Face mask **DOs**:
 - Make sure it fits well and doesn't gape at the sides.
 - Wash your hands before putting it on and after taking it off.
 - Wear masks for a short time.
 - Carry a bag with clean masks and a bag that can be used to store used masks until they can be washed at home.
- Face mask **DON'Ts**:
 - Don't re-use masks or share them with others.
 - Don't wear a mask that is damp or soiled.
 - Don't touch your face while wearing a mask.
 - Don't remove or adjust a mask while it is on your face.

Notification and Follow up Process of a Confirmed Case

- The following process applies when a case of COVID-19 is confirmed by the province of Alberta's public health laboratory for an individual with a First Nation identified as the place of residence.
 - The FNIHB Medical Officer of Health (MOH) is informed by the provincial lab of any positive test results for individuals with a First Nation listed as the place of residence.
 - The FNIHB-AB MOH informs the FNIHB-AB Communicable Disease Control (CDC) team of the positive case.
 - The FNIHB CDC team will contact the Nation's community health nursing team.
 - The individual will be notified of the test result by the community public health nursing team and direction will be given to self-isolate.
 - The FNIHB CDC team will review case management and contact tracing requirements with the community health nurse (CHN).
 - The Nation's CHN will follow-up directly with the client to review isolation requirements and collect the relevant information to initiate public health follow-up measures.
 - The Nation's CHN will initiate the contact tracing process and complete the close contact information list. Information about close contact exposure to the case and an assessment of symptoms will take place.

- Appropriate isolation and testing for close contacts of the COVID 19 positive individual will occur to ensure public health measures are in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in the community.
- Simultaneously, the Executive team will inform the community Leadership of a confirmed case in the community. FNIHB-AB Executive team, like community Leadership, are not direct health service providers in the circle-of-care and thus do not have access to individually identifying health information.

Mental health and Wellness

- The Government of Alberta is providing a one-time grant of up to \$25 million for Mental Health and Addiction COVID-19 Community Funding. Organizations can apply for funding for projects that enhance community mental health and addiction recovery supports and services. Approved projects are eligible for up to \$500,000. Funding will be distributed through 3 calls for proposals from Alberta Health.
 - **First call for proposals** – immediately to May 2020.
 - Second call for proposals – May 2020 to August 2020.
 - Third call for proposals – August 2020 to November 2020.
 More information on eligibility and the application process can be found at <https://www.alberta.ca/mental-health-and-addiction-covid-19-community-funding-grant.aspx>.
- With improving weather, 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.
 - Go outside only if you are healthy and without symptoms.
 - If you are outside, please do what you can to protect yourself and those around you.
 - Practice hand hygiene and cough/mask etiquette.
 - Practice physical distancing
 - Avoid touching rails, garbage cans or other potential source of transmission.
- 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.

Food Security

- Food insecurity is a serious issue for many communities and may be impacted further by the current situation. If you are seeking additional funding for your food distribution activities, the 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/>
- If your community is looking for ideas and planning support for any food security initiatives during this time. Please reach out to the Nutrition Advisory Team at laura.white@canada.ca.

Guidance on Funerals

- Recognizing the need to honour those who pass away during this time, and that burials should take place in a timely manner, it is recommended that funeral ceremonies not involving the burial be postponed. If a ceremony does occur, the following procedures are recommended:
 - Consider the use of virtual technologies in place of in-person services and gatherings.
 - Limit the number of people involved in the ceremony to only members of the immediate family/same household.
 - Physical distancing of all individuals should be at least 6 feet at all times.
 - Wear a homemade facial covering that covers your mouth and nose.
 - Individuals who are ill, or have high-risk medical conditions must not attend. Friends, family and other visitors should not touch or kiss the body.
 - Do not share bowls, utensils, pipes, or ceremonial objects.
 - Maintain a list of all participants, in the event that tracing needs to be done.

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) <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/ISCIInfo>
<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](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.
<https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>
- 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.

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