

# Novel coronavirus (COVID-19):

## Weekly Bulletin to First Nations in Alberta: March 6, 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)

### Status Update

Confirmed cases reported, as of March 5, 2020:

	Alberta (Alberta Health)	Canada (Public Health Agency of Canada)	Globally (World Health Organization)
Cases	0	34 (ON = 20, BC = 13, QC = 1)	93,090
Deaths	-	0	3,198

- **There are no confirmed or probable cases in Alberta.** Thirty-four confirmed or probable cases have been announced in Canada.
- **The current risk level to Albertans is still low.** The province determines the risk level by assessing how likely Albertans are to be exposed to the virus in the province. Currently, Albertans have a very low chance of contracting the virus. If this changes, the risk level in Alberta will be updated accordingly.
- Based on evolving information, Alberta has joined the rest of Canada in taking precautions to limit risk and protect the health of all Albertans. As such, Alberta has expanded its testing protocol to include travellers returning from the following areas: China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Iran, South Korea, Japan, and Italy. Travellers that are arriving in Canada from these countries are being screened for illness at the ports of entry.
- Alberta Health is recommending that these travellers\*
  - Monitor for symptoms, like a fever or coughing, daily for 14 days after they have left the affected area; and
  - Contact [Health Link 811](#) for medical advice if they or a family member:
    - Feel ill after returning
    - Were in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19
    - Were in a health-care facility in any of the above mentioned countries

*\*Exception – As a precautionary measure, travellers returning from Iran or Hubei province, China are being asked to self-isolate until 14 days have passed since their visit.*

### COVID-19: Symptoms and Transmission

- Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other respiratory illnesses. The most common symptoms include fever, cough, and feeling extremely tired.
- Most people (about 80%) recover from this disease without needing special treatment. Those who are older, and those with other medical problems are more at risk of severe illness.
- While COVID-19 can cause serious illness, many patients have reported only mild symptoms.



- There is evidence of **person-to-person spread**. At this time, it appears the virus is transmitted by larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze. It is also possible for people to be exposed to the virus by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. There is no evidence that it's capable of being transmitted by products imported from affected countries.

### ***COVID-19: Prevention and Treatment***

- For now, there is no available vaccine.
- Supportive care has been used in treatment of patients with COVID-19 and some medications are being tested to see if they can help patients with severe disease.
- Consult [Health Link 811](#) or your health care provider if you're:
  - Concerned about your health, or
  - Feeling ill and recently travelled to China, Iran or another affected country.

### ***Current Public Health Actions***

Alberta's public health officials are carefully monitoring the situation in Canada and around the world, and are ready to respond should there be any cases in this province. They are:

- Working closely with federal and provincial partners to share information and assess potential health risks.
- Ensuring our health system is ready to respond effectively if needed.
- Ensuring front-line health professionals have information about the virus so they can take recommended actions and promptly report suspected cases to public health officials.
- Although travel-related cases may be identified in the future, the risk for Albertans is still considered low. Public health measures are in place to quickly identify potential cases and prevent the infection from spreading.

### ***Actions First Nation communities are encouraged to take***

- Update and inform your community members of the evolving situation through existing community communication channels.
- Review and update the pandemic annex of your All-Hazards Emergency Response Plan.
- Be aware of current public health measures and infection prevention and control measures.
- Educate community members on the steps they can take to protect themselves against respiratory illnesses (below).
- Regularly check trusted sources of information, like the Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services links provided in this bulletin.

### ***Actions individuals and families can take***

To help protect against all respiratory illnesses, including the flu and COVID-19, you should:

- Wash your hands often and well.
- Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.
- Stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill.
- When sick, cover your cough and sneezes and then wash your hands.

### ***Wearing Medical Masks***

- If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended.
- When sick, wearing a mask helps prevent illnesses from being passed on to other people. This is why people who have a cough or respiratory symptoms are asked to wear a mask and wash their hands when visiting the clinic.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Health Centre Staff and Patients**

- Droplet and contact precautions are recommended for patients presenting with influenza-like illness, as per standard recommendations.
- First Nations communities should continue to access PPE via their regular processes. If communities are unable to access routine supplies (procedure/surgical masks, gowns, face shields gloves, etc.) due to supplier shortages, please email [sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca](mailto:sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca)
- Work is currently underway to secure access to PPE in the event of a pandemic.

### **What FNIHB is doing**

- FNIHB-AB is launching a series of telehealth sessions for First Nations in Alberta. These sessions will deal specifically with planning and preparedness for COVID-19. **The next telehealth session will be held on March 6, 2020.**
- In addition to the resources currently available for health staff on the OneHealth.ca web portal, FNIHB is in the process of creating tools to support COVID-19 specific readiness in First Nations communities. New resources and tools are being added to OneHealth on a regular basis.
- In-person, train-the trainer, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and PPE sessions are occurring in locations around the province during the first two weeks of March. Community Health Nurses (2-3 from each community) will receive a review of COVID-19 IPC and PPE practices. Nurses who attend the training can then train others in the community.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Training Location</b>
Thursday, March 5	Slave Lake area nurses	Slave Lake
Monday, March 9	High Level area nurses	High Level
Wednesday, March 11	Calgary area nurses	High River
Thursday, March 12	Lakeland area nurses	St. Paul

\*Training has been completed in Maskwacis and Fort McMurray area.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **How can families and communities plan ahead?**

- Canada is ready to respond to any cases that may arise, but it is also important for individuals and communities to be ready if the illness is to spread.
- Make a plan. If COVID-19 becomes common in your community, you will want to have thought about how to change your behaviours and routines to reduce the risk of infection. Some things to think about include:
  - Doing your grocery shopping during off-peak hours
  - Refill prescriptions now so that you do not have to go to a busy pharmacy if you do become sick
  - Stock up on essentials, but avoid panic buying
- For more information on how to prepare yourself and your family, please visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>

#### **What should I do about upcoming travel plans?**

- Many families are planning trips outside of Canada, including the United States, in the next several weeks. If you are planning a trip, before you leave, please consult the Government of Canada travel advisory website at <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories> to see the most up to date travel information.
- Make sure you follow the advice above on handwashing and cleaning surfaces whether at home or on vacation.

### ***Updates and additional information***

For current trusted information on novel coronavirus (COVID-19), refer to the following websites, which 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>

**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/ISCInfo>

**Public Health Guidance for schools (K-12) and childcare programs** - <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/guidance-schools-childcare-programs.html>

**Johns Hopkins University Interactive Dashboard** – [Coronavirus COVID-19 Global Cases](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/global-cases)

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 assessment and health advice.**

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