

COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS) as of April 2 AT 5:30 pm

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COVID-19 – THE DISEASE, SYMPTOMS, ITS SPREAD, TESTING AND PRECAUTIONS

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 is the official name for the disease causing the novel coronavirus outbreak, which was first identified in Wuhan, China and now has spread around the world. The name stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019.

What is a novel coronavirus?

- Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the coronavirus that have not been previously identified in humans. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that include common human coronaviruses that cause the common cold and more serious ones that include SARS, MERS, and most recently, COVID-19.

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms are similar to those for influenza and other respiratory illnesses. COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, and runny nose. Most people (around 80%) recover without needing medical treatment.
- Those who are older and those with other medical problems are more likely to develop serious symptoms, which can include difficulty breathing and pneumonia. There is a risk of death in severe cases.
- Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19.

How does COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 is spread by others who have the virus. It is transmitted from person to person through droplets from the nose or mouth, which are spread when a person with the virus coughs or sneezes. People then catch COVID-19 when they breathe in these droplets.
- These droplets can also contaminate objects or surfaces. People can catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Studies suggest the virus only lasts a few hours on a surface, though it may be possible for it to last several days under ideal conditions. There is no evidence that suggests COVID-19 can be spread through imported goods.

Can COVID-19 be spread through the air?

- Current evidence indicates COVID-19 is not airborne and only transmitted through respiratory droplets when an individual coughs or sneezes (see above).

Can COVID-19 be spread by a person who has no symptoms?

- Because the disease spreads through respiratory droplets, the risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms is low. However, for many people, symptoms may be very mild. In these cases, transmission is possible – even if the person is feeling well and only experiencing a mild cough, for example.

What precautions should Albertans take to stay healthy?

- To protect yourself and others:
 - practice [physical distancing](#)
 - stay home and away from others if sick or in isolation
 - wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow
 - avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
 - [self-isolate](#) for 14 days if you were exposed to COVID-19 or have returned from travel outside of Canada. If symptoms occur, you must remain in self-isolation an additional 10 days from the onset your symptoms or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer
 - self-isolate for at least 10 days if you are experiencing a COVID-19 symptom not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition.

What is the best way to practise physical distancing?

- To protect yourself and others:

- keep at least 6 feet (the length of a bicycle) from others when going for a walk, or 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
 - avoid overcrowding in elevators or other enclosed spaces
 - follow Alberta's recommendations on mass gatherings
 - wash or sanitize your hands after touching communal surfaces
- A [fact sheet](#) on physical distancing is available [online](#).

What other precautions can I take?

- Stay up to date on the situation and get your information from reliable sources, such as this webpage: www.alberta.ca/COVID19.
- Have enough essential supplies (food, water and medicine) to last for 72 hours, but avoid panic buying — the unnecessary purchasing of large quantities of items.
 - For more information on how to be prepared for emergencies, go to: <https://www.alberta.ca/build-an-emergency-kit.aspx>
- Create a household plan of action. This can include these elements:
 - Talk with the people who need to be included in your plan.
 - Have a conversation with household members, other relatives, and friends to discuss what to do if a COVID-19 outbreak occurs in your community and what the needs of each person will be.
 - Plan ways to care for those who might be at greater risk for serious complications. This includes practical steps like ensuring you have sufficient medication and determining what supplies are needed, and if they can be delivered.
 - Talk with your neighbours about emergency planning.
 - Create a list of local organizations that you and your household can contact in the event you need access to information, health care services, support and resources.
 - Create an emergency contact list.
- Practice good personal health habits and plan for home-based actions:
 - Practice everyday preventive actions, like those listed in the prevention section.
 - Choose a room in your home that can be used to separate sick household members from those who are healthy. Identify a separate bathroom for the sick person to use, if possible. Plan to clean these rooms, as needed, when someone is sick.
- Plan for potential changes at your workplace.
 - Learn about your employer's emergency operations plan.
 - Ask about what sick-leave policies and telework options are available if needed.

When someone tests positive, isn't the public at risk?

- As soon as a case is identified, our public health measures take immediate action to protect Albertans.
- Once a case is confirmed, AHS immediately conducts a risk assessment of anyone who may have come in close contact with them.
- Anyone who may have come in close contact is legally required to self-isolate at home, away from the public, until 14 days have passed since their last contact with the case, and will be closely monitored by public health officials.
- If they do develop symptoms, health officials will coordinate getting them into care immediately while ensuring that the public and health-care workers are not exposed.
- Anyone who is not contacted is not at risk and does not need to take any additional measures.

We've gotten tips about a case? Is this accurate?

- We cannot comment on any rumour or provide information regarding specific cases, due to patient confidentiality.

- We take patient confidentiality seriously, and we are taking steps to balance confidentiality with the public interest.
- Alberta's health professionals are processing a very high volume of COVID-19 test results. We are providing results to people waiting as quickly as possible, however given the high volume, there can be delays. It can take up to four days to get results.
- People who have been tested will be contacted directly with their results.
- Anyone who has been tested will have been told to self-isolate until they receive their results in order to reduce the risk of transmission. It is extremely important that they follow these instructions.
- We are being fully transparent and sharing information with Albertans when it becomes available.
- We are releasing the sex, approximate age, zone and cumulative travel history to ensure that Albertans are informed while still respecting each person's right to privacy when receiving medical care.
- Aggregate data, showing cases by age range and zone, as well as by local geographic areas, is available online at: [Alberta.ca/covid19statistics](https://alberta.ca/covid19statistics).
- Generally speaking, anytime someone tests positive for COVID-19, health officials take immediate action to protect the health of everyone involved and prevent the virus from spreading.
- This includes isolating the case, assessing all close contacts and asking anyone at risk of being exposed to self-isolate for 14 days.
- I want to stress that, if you have not been contacted directly by AHS, you are not at risk.

Couldn't these individuals have spread it to anyone they met in grocery stores or other public places?

- We take swift action to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Anyone who tested positive or who was in close contact with someone who did is legally required to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- It's important to remember how this virus spreads. Unlike measles, it is not airborne.
- At this time, it appears COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person spread by larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze, or touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Individuals who passed a confirmed case on the street are not at risk to have contracted the virus.
- We continue to act on the best possible information and alert Albertans as appropriate, including updating our travel advice and recommending against any travel outside of the country.
- Additionally, as of March 12, any traveller returning from outside of the country must self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. If symptoms do emerge, first use the simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) developed by Alberta Health Services to help you decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide you to answer questions about your symptoms and take you through steps to help determine whether you need testing.

I'm pregnant – am I at higher risk of complications from COVID-19?

- Current evidence is limited on the risk of COVID-19 to pregnant women.
- Research on other respiratory illnesses indicates pregnant women may be at higher risk of severe illness compared to the general population. However, the limited data available to date on COVID-19 is not showing this same trend.
- Pregnant women should engage in the usual preventive actions to avoid infection, such as frequently washing hands and avoiding people who are sick.

I'm nursing/I have a baby – how do I self-isolate? Should I stop breastfeeding?

- The main form of COVID-19 infection is through human-to-human transmission via respiratory droplets expelled when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- No evidence to date that the virus is found in the breast milk of women with COVID-19.
- We recommend mothers with COVID-19 take preventative actions, such as frequently washing commonly touched surfaces, washing hands before touching the baby or wearing a mask to limit the risk of spread.

Is the virus transmitted through animals? Is it transmitted through water?

- The World Health Organization (WHO) has developed a list of questions and answers about COVID-19, how it spreads and how it is affecting people worldwide. It is available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>.
- Visit alberta.ca/COVID19 for the latest information on the situation in Alberta.

TESTING

Who will get tested for COVID-19?

- Testing is prioritized for the following symptomatic individuals:
 - People who are hospitalized with respiratory illness;
 - Residents of continuing care and other similar facilities;
 - People who returned from travelling outside Canada between March 8 and 12 (before the self-isolation protocols were in place); and
 - Health care workers with respiratory symptoms.
- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms who does not fit in these categories must stay home and self-isolate for ten days from the start of their symptoms, or until symptom resolution, whichever takes longer.

Why have you changed the self-isolation guidelines from 14 days to 10?

- We have updated these recommendations based on the most up-to-date medical evidence. We now know if you are feeling well after 10 days from the onset of symptoms, you will be able to stop self-isolating, provided your symptoms have resolved.

Does this mean people who have returned from international travel are no longer at risk of spreading the virus?

- Returning international travellers must self-isolate for 14 days upon return, even if they are feeling well. This requirement is a legal requirement.
- People in this group are still at risk of spreading the virus and may have mild or no symptoms, meaning they could spread the virus without knowing it. They must self-isolate.
- Testing will continue for symptomatic people who returned from travel before March 12, 2020.

How will AHS build extra capacity to stay in contact with people with mild symptoms? When will this happen?

- AHS has reallocated staff to a call centre where staff will proactively call people who have returned to Canada and are in isolation with mild symptoms. They will receive regular calls until their 14-day self-isolation period ends if their symptoms have resolved.

What would constitute severe symptoms and what would be mild symptoms?

- Mild symptoms are symptoms such as fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches or shortness of breath that can be managed at home and do not need emergency room visits or hospitalization. Symptoms that warrant emergency room visits or hospitalization such as difficulty breathing or chest pain are considered severe symptoms.

What other groups might be at greater risk besides residents of continuing care facilities, health staff with symptoms, anyone hospitalized with respiratory illness? How will you identify them?

- Right now, we are focusing on symptomatic healthcare workers, symptomatic residents of continuing care and other congregate living facilities and people who are receiving care in hospital. Our surveillance team is closely tracking the spread of the virus to determine if there are any other groups we should focus on.

Would infants showing symptoms fall into a high-priority group for testing? I'm worried that if my baby gets sick with covid-19 they could get really sick really fast, but I also know we should avoid visiting our local clinic or the ER. Advice?

- At this time, infants and children would not fall under this high-priority group because evidence to date indicates children with confirmed COVID-19 generally experience mild symptoms, including fever, runny nose and cough. Severe illness has been rare in children so far. The best advice is to stay at home and treat the illness like you would a typical flu or cold.

So now only people in the priority category are being tested. Will you test any others, and if so who will you determine who?

- Right now, we are focusing on symptomatic healthcare workers, symptomatic residents of continuing care and other congregate living facilities and people with respiratory symptoms who are receiving care in hospital. Other groups we will focus on in the coming days include other essential service workers, people living in rural and remote communities or homeless shelters. Our surveillance team is closely tracking the spread of the virus to determine if there are any other groups we should focus on.

Some people think you should be doing more testing and now with this change it seems like there will be less. So why the change?

- Changing our testing protocols allows us to focus Alberta's testing capacity on those most at risk.
- This is consistent with the approach happening across Canada. It enables us to strategically use our testing resources. Our new approach reflects the fact that the most important thing anyone can do if they have mild symptoms isn't to get tested - it's to stay home and self-isolate.

Are you doing fewer tests because our testing supplies are running low?

- Testing capacity and supplies continue to meet the high demand for testing. In fact, our testing laboratories are once again working to capacity and as of April 1, our labs have conducted 53,000 tests, which leads many other jurisdictions in testing per capita.

Is Alberta's current testing capacity enough?

- Alberta is continuing to test people for COVID-19 and has completed more than 57,000 tests as of April 2.
- This includes opening assessment centres, where needed, increasing the number of nurses at Health Link 811 and procuring additional lab equipment.
- Alberta Health Services has also developed a simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help individuals decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide individuals to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- That said, we are taking more aggressive public health measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. This includes measures to free up more lab space for testing.
- Alberta Precision Laboratories and DynaLIFE are asking physicians and community providers to immediately stop all non-essential and routine laboratory testing. Any bloodwork critical to a patient's immediate care will continue to be tested.

Where is the testing being done?

- Testing for the novel coronavirus was originally done both in Alberta and at the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.
- We originally announced presumptive cases of COVID-19 and sent samples to the National Microbiology Laboratory to confirm the result. This is best practice for a province's initial confirmations.
- As of March 9, positive samples tested by Alberta laboratories no longer require further confirmation from the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

Where are the assessment centres?

- We do not share the exact locations as we do not want to confuse public who may believe that they can walk in.
- Again, these are not walk-in clinics. Those individuals who are referred to these clinics are provided with location specifics.
- General locations and their relative traffic so far:
 - Edmonton's North Assessment Centre has seen 5,888 patients since opening on March 7th.
 - Edmonton's South Assessment Centre has seen 3,128 patients since opening on March 14th.
 - Edmonton's West Fast-track Assessment Centre has seen 3,284 patients since opening on March 15.
 - Calgary's West (RRDTC) indoor Assessment Centre has seen 6,655 patients since opening March 7.
 - Calgary's West Fast-track Assessment Centre has seen 7,660 patients since opening March 10.
 - Calgary's South Calgary Fast-track Assessment Centre has seen 1,591 patients since opening on March 17.
 - Calgary's Fast-track Assessment Centre in the NE quadrant (McKnight) has seen 701 patients since opening March 23.
 - Red Deer's Fast Track Assessment Centre has seen 2,650 patients since opening March 14.
 - Camrose's Fast Track Assessment Centre has seen 906 patients since opening March 14.
 - Lloydminster's Fast Assessment Centre has seen 72 patients since opening March 24.
 - Lethbridge's Assessment Centre has seen 56 patients since opening March 24.
 - Medicine Hat's Assessment Centre has seen 58 patients since opening March 24.
 - North Zone is currently doing assessment in the community either through public health centres or home visits.

What are the Fast-track centres and how do they operate?

- These sites enable people who have been referred by Health Link for testing to simply drive to one of these locations, and get swabbed by a public health nurse through their car window.
- Once they've been swabbed, they then drive home and self-isolate until they get their results back.
- This model has shown to work well in other jurisdictions. Feedback is it is more convenient for those being tested. There is no need to enter a clinic, and there is no need for patients to don PPE.
- It eliminates spending time in a waiting room, reducing risk of transmission. And, it increases our capacity to test, and minimizes risk of public transmission.

Can we (MEDIA) go visit one?

- We won't be providing media access to the assessment centres, for a number of reasons.
- It would not be prudent or safe to let media into areas where people who may have COVID-19 are being assessed.
- In addition, we have to ensure that we protect patient privacy.
- And, we have to prevent any disruption to our healthcare teams during this time.
- We have developed b-roll footage, which can be provided at anytime.

Are assessment centres safe?

- We have taken every precaution to ensure that assessment centres are safe for patients being tested, staff and the public.
- Infection prevention control and personal protective equipment measures are in place at all assessment centres. These ensure that COVID-19 is not transmitted to staff or other patients
- Individuals who visit the centres for their referred testing are required to wear masks, and all staff working at the site are also wearing masks, gowns and all other necessary personal protective equipment.
- Additionally, enhanced cleaning is in place, to address the risk of droplet contact transmission on surfaces.

How are we coping with current volumes of testing for COVID-19?

- We have significantly extended our lab testing hours for COVID-19 testing, starting early in the morning and typically ending after midnight.
- We are in the process of bringing in more well-trained staff from other areas of the lab network, as well as areas such as molecular pathology and genetics.
- We are bringing in additional laboratory instruments to help increase capacity.
- Fast-track drive-up assessment services have been established in Calgary Zone, Edmonton Zone, as well as Red Deer and Camrose, to increase capacity and speed of service for COVID-19 testing.
 - The first drive-up service was established on March 10. There are now five fast track, drive-up assessment centres operating with one more scheduled to open in Calgary and two more under consideration for Airdrie and the Bow Valley.
- Alberta Health Services has also developed a simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help individuals decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide individuals to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.

What are the current wait times for testing appointments and testing results?

- Testing volumes are extremely high right now.
- Please keep self-isolating until you've been tested and received your results.
- We know this might be frustrating – thanks for your patience.

If someone was ill with symptoms before these protocols were put in place and recovered, can they still be tested? Should they?

- If 10 days have passed after the onset of their first symptom, anyone who has recovered will be clinically assessed as not contagious anymore and does not require testing at this time.

How can I follow along and stay-up-to-date with new developments?

- Visit alberta.ca/COVID19 for the latest information.

SELF-ISOLATION

Who needs to self-isolate?

- You are legally required to self-isolate if:
 - you returned from travelling outside of Canada, you must self-isolate for 14 days from your return. If symptoms occur, you must remain in self-isolation for an additional 10 days from the onset your symptoms or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer.
 - you have been identified by AHS as a close contact of a person(s) with COVID-19, you must self-isolate for 14 days from the date of your last exposure to COVID-19, plus an additional 10 days from the onset of any symptoms should they occur, whichever is longer.
 - you have a COVID-19 symptom (cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat) that is not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition. You must self-isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.

On which day does the 14-day self-isolation period begin after having close contact with someone who has the virus?

- Close contacts of cases are to be quarantined for 14 days from their last exposure to the case. The last day of exposure is considered day 0 for the purposes of counting.
- If there is ongoing unprotected contact (such as in a household setting) the quarantine period begins when the COVID-19 case is considered no longer infectious. This would be 10 days after symptoms began in the case, or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.

What rules do I need to follow if I'm self-isolating?

- The rules around mandatory self-isolation have been clarified to better protect all Albertans. Anyone under mandatory self-isolation must stay indoors and may only go outside on their own private property – meaning their yard or balcony if it's at least two metres from their neighbour's.
- If you need to self-isolate, you must follow these steps:
 - Stay home – do not leave your home or attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings.
 - Avoid close contact with other people, including household members but especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems.
 - Don't take public transportation like buses, taxis or ride-sharing, where possible. If you are under mandatory self-isolation, taking public transportation is legally prohibited.
 - Watch for symptoms in yourself or a family member.
 - Watch for symptoms like fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose or difficulty breathing in yourself or a family member.
 - Should any symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.
- [For more information, consult the self-isolation guidelines.](#)

Why have the self-isolation rules been changed to be even more restrictive?

- Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health has clarified the rules around self isolation to align with the rules under the federal *Quarantine Act*, which requires any Canadian under mandatory self-isolation to remain on their property for the duration of the self-isolation time.
- After significant discussion, Dr. Hinshaw and her colleagues around the country came to consensus that because there is a risk of people getting ill while they are out, there must be a uniform recommendation across the country.
- That means if you are quarantined because you recently came back from outside the country, or you are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, you must remain on your own property.
- While you may go outdoors in your yard or on your balcony, under no circumstances should you leave your property during the 14 days of isolation.

Is their employer closed? Should co-workers be self-isolated?

- AHS works closely with an employer and any co-workers who are in close contact and at risk of exposure will be self-isolated.
- Albertans have been asked not to attend some businesses at this time. Check online for the latest details on [business, workplaces and facility closures](#).
- Businesses that can continue to provide services at locations accessible to the public must have proper risk mitigation measures in place, such as sanitation stations and appropriate distancing between customers.

How will you know if someone in self-isolation is safe?

- If 14 days pass without symptoms, anyone in isolation will be clinically assessed as not having COVID-19.

If family members or travellers are self-isolating in a household, do other members of the same household also need to self-isolate? Specifically, if no one is showing symptoms?

- At this time, no, other household members are not required to self-isolate, but they should monitor for symptoms (and self-isolate if symptoms occur).
- Should any symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

What should people do if friends/loved ones refuse to self-isolate?

- Remind the person that not following public health orders is against the law and puts people at risk. Law enforcement has been granted full authority to enforce public health orders and issue fines.

- Take proper precautions and if possible, distance yourself from the individual to limit your risk of exposure if they have symptoms.
- If there are supports that person needs to self-isolate, consider what options your community may have to provide those supports and encourage the person to reach out to those services.
- If necessary, submit a complaint [online](#).

Can I go outside if I am legally required to self-isolate but don't have any symptoms and haven't tested positive for COVID-19?

- Anyone under mandatory self-isolation must not leave their property, period.
- You can get fresh air in your backyard, if you have one, but you must remain on private property not accessible by others.
- You are not allowed to leave your property to go for a walk through your neighbourhood or park. This includes children in mandatory self-isolation.
- If you live in an apartment building or highrise, you must stay inside and cannot use the elevators or stairwells to go outside. If your balcony is private and at least two metres away from your closest neighbour's, you may go outside on the balcony.

How long do people need to self-isolate if symptoms present?

- People need to self-isolate for **10** days from the onset of symptoms.
- This is the most up-to-date recommendation based on medical evidence.

What counts as COVID-19 symptoms that require self-isolation? What if I have a runny nose due to allergies?

- Albertans are asked to stay home even if they have mild symptoms such as a fever, cough, sore throat or runny nose. These symptoms, even if mild, can be linked to COVID-19. If you are sick, you should stay home.
- The legal requirement to self-isolate applies to any individual with COVID-19 symptoms which are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition: such as a fever, cough, sore throat or a runny nose.

Should people at higher risk of complications be pre-emptively self-isolating?

- People are now legally required to self-isolate if one or more of the following applies:
 - They recently returned from travel outside Canada
 - They have fever, cough, sore throat, or a runny nose.
 - They are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
 - They have been asked to self-isolate by a health care professional for another reason
- If you don't meet these criteria, we are not requesting that you self-isolate. If you are at a higher risk of complications from COVID-19, you may wish to stay at home and limit your time in groups and public spaces. We also encourage all Albertans to stay away from people who are sick, wash hands frequently and take the other steps for prevention outlined on alberta.ca/COVID19.

ENFORCEMENT OF SELF-ISOLATION ORDERS

What does enforcement look like? What happens when someone violates these orders?

- Anyone putting their families, their neighbours, or other Albertans at risk will face consequences.
- Through amendments to the Procedures Regulation under the Provincial Offences Procedures Act, community peace officers, in addition to police, will be able to issue tickets to enforce COVID-19 public health orders.
- Fines administered through tickets for violating an order have increased from up to \$100 per day to a prescribed fine of \$1,000 per occurrence.

- Courts will also have increased powers to administer fines of up to \$100,000 for a first offence and up to \$500,000 for a subsequent offence for more serious violations.
- These are aggressive measures that we do not take lightly, but they are necessary to keep us all healthy and safe.

What specific public health orders are subject to fines for violation?

- Public health orders subject to fines for violation include:
 - Any individual who has travelled outside of Canada must go into mandatory self-isolation for 14 days from their return, plus an additional 10 days from the onset of any symptoms should they occur, whichever is longer.
 - Any individual who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms must self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the start of their symptoms, or until the symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. Symptoms include cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or a sore throat.
 - Any individual who has been identified by Alberta Health Services as a close contact of a person(s) with COVID-19 must go into mandatory self-isolation for 14 days from the date of last having been exposed to COVID-19, plus an additional 10 days from the onset of any symptoms should they occur, whichever is longer.
 - Mass gatherings must be limited to no more than 15 attendees.
 - Albertans have been asked not to attend some businesses at this time. Check online for the latest details on [business, workplaces and facility closures](#).
 - Businesses that can continue to provide services at locations accessible to the public must have proper risk mitigation measures in place, such as sanitation stations and appropriate distancing between customers.
 - Access to public recreational facilities, private entertainment facilities, bars and nightclubs is prohibited.
 - Visitation to long-term care and other continuing care facilities is limited to essential visitors only.

What is a considered a routine offence?

- Routine offences typically apply to situations involving individuals violating self-isolation orders to pick up prescriptions from the pharmacy, etc.
- Significant fines would apply to businesses/corporations that remain open if they were ordered to close.

Won't this just overwhelm the court system? What is the process for handling routine offenses?

- Tickets will be issued for routine offences. These can be paid online through the government's webpage: <https://eservices.alberta.ca/fine-payments.html>.
- More significant fines will apply in certain circumstances and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Who employs Public Health Inspectors?

- Public health inspectors are Alberta Health Services (AHS) employees.
- Public health inspectors assist in the identification, planning, implementation and evaluation of environmental public health activities across the province of Alberta.
- They enforce sections of the Public Health Act and regulations pertaining to environmental public health concerns.

What are Community Peace Officers? Who does that include?

- Community peace officers, in addition to police, will be able to issue tickets to enforce COVID-19 public health orders.

- Community peace officers are employed by these organizations:
 - municipalities and counties
 - automated traffic enforcement programs
 - police services
 - hospitals
 - animal protection agencies
 - post-secondary institutions
 - Indigenous communities

Are Community Peace Officers supportive of this approach? Are you putting them at risk?

- The Chief Medical Officer of Health has the full cooperation of community peace officers and local policing to ensure Albertans comply with orders.
- Justice and Solicitor General, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services are working together to develop information that will be shared with all police and peace officer agencies across the province, including information on proper risk mitigation.

Have you consulted with municipalities?

- Municipal Affairs has consulted with AUMA, RMA, the City of Calgary and the City of Edmonton.

What are Albertans supposed to do if they witness/are aware of individuals who are not following the self-isolation orders?

- Take proper precautions and, if possible, distance yourself from the individual to limit your risk of exposure if they have symptoms.
- If possible, remind the person that not following public health orders is against the law and puts people at risk.
- Notify local law enforcement immediately of any individuals who are not following the self-isolation orders by submitting a complaint online (<https://ephisahs.microsoftcrmportals.com/create-case/>).
- The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are working with local enforcement agencies to manage complaints.

What are Albertans supposed to do if they witness business or other organizations that are not following the public health orders?

- Notify local law enforcement immediately of any businesses or other organizations who are not following the self-isolation orders by submitting a complaint online (<https://ephisahs.microsoftcrmportals.com/create-case/>).
- The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are working with local enforcement agencies to manage complaints.

How many COVID-19 related complaints have been submitted online so far?

- As of March 31, Alberta Health Services has received over 4,200 COVID-related complaints.

TRAVEL AND RETURNING TRAVELLERS

A flight attendant is isolating. Are passengers at risk?

- It's important to remember that COVID-19 is not airborne. It is spread by droplets or touching surfaces and then touching your face, so close contact is required.
- Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats are [posted online](#) by the Government of Canada.
 - All passengers from international flights are legally required to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

- Passengers in affected seats from domestic flights are considered close contacts are at risk of exposure. They are legally required to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

What advice are you providing Albertans who want to travel?

- An official global travel advisory is in effect. Albertans should follow all travel recommendations. Avoid all non-essential travel outside Canada and all cruise ship travel.
- Any traveller returning from outside of the country is legally required to self-isolate for 14 days, even if they are feeling well, and monitor for symptoms. If symptoms occur, they must remain in self-isolation an additional 10 days from the onset symptoms or until they're feeling better, whichever is longer.
- We have made this mandatory based on the ongoing developments outside Alberta, both in the actions being taken by other jurisdictions, as well as the increasing spread of cases around the world.
- The federal government is restricting individuals from domestic air or train travel if they show symptoms of COVID-19, including a cough, fever or difficulty breathing.

How do I know if someone on my flight is diagnosed with COVID-19 and if I'm at risk?

- Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats are [posted online](#) by the Government of Canada.
 - All passengers from international flights are legally required to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
 - Passengers in affected seats from domestic flights are considered close contacts are at risk of exposure. They are legally required to self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.

If I have returned from outside Canada, am tested for COVID and test negative – do I still need to self-isolate for the full 14 days? Or can I stop if I get a negative test and have no symptoms?

- You still need to self-isolate for 14 days.

What about families of returning travellers, do they also need to self-isolate?

- At this time, self-isolation does not extend to family members. However family members must practice good hygiene and take precautions to reduce potential exposure.

Can people continue to final destination or must they self-isolate immediately upon arriving back in the country?

- They must self-isolate when they arrive home. However, if they experience any symptoms before their trip begins, they need to alert airport/travel officials and NOT take public transport.

I just returned from outside of Canada, what am I supposed to do?

- All Albertans returning from outside Canada are legally required to self-isolate for 14 days after arrival in Canada and monitor for symptoms. If symptoms occur, they must remain in self-isolation an additional 10 days from the onset symptoms or until they're feeling better, whichever is longer.
- If you recently returned from outside Canada:
 1. [self-isolate](#) for 14 days, even if you're feeling well
 2. [monitor for symptoms](#) such as fever, cough, sore throat, or runny nose.
 3. If symptoms occur, you must remain in self-isolation for an additional 10 days from the onset of symptoms or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer. Complete the simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required

I just returned from somewhere in Canada, am I at risk, and what are my next steps?

- If you have recently returned from somewhere in Canada, [check the list of affected flights for updates](#).
 1. [self-isolate](#) for 14 days if you were found to be in an affected seat.

2. [monitor for symptoms](#) such as fever, cough, sore throat, or runny nose.
 3. If symptoms occur, you must remain in self-isolation an additional 10 days from the onset symptoms or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer. Complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.
- Passengers who were on the plane but not in affected seats are not required to self-isolate but should monitor for symptoms for 14 days.
 - If COVID-19 symptoms occur, you must self-isolate for 10 days or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer. Complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

How should I travel home from the airport? Should I take a taxi or airport shuttle? Will I potentially put other passengers at risk?

- If you are well, there should be no concern.
- If you have a fever, cough, sore throat or runny nose, or don't feel well, sit a safe distance from the driver/other passengers, if possible, cover your coughs and sneezes, and practice good hygiene. It is also recommend to wear a mask, if possible.

Can returning travellers stop to visit family on their way home from their airport, or have their family over to visit while they are isolating?

- All Albertans who have travelled outside of the country, including snowbirds returning home from wintering in the United States and other countries, must go straight home upon returning to Alberta and self-isolate for 14 days.
- Do not go to the grocery store. Don't stop at the kennel to pick up your dog. Don't drop your RV off for service or storage, or and do not have family and friends over to visit.
- Go directly and immediately home, self-isolate for the legally required 14 days. This means staying on your private property, not going out for walks or to any public spaces and monitoring for symptoms.
- If symptoms do develop, individuals must self-isolate from all other members of their household for an additional 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or until they are feeling well, whichever takes longer.
- Self-isolation orders are not suggestions or guidelines, they are now the law and they must be followed.

Can returning travellers go outside to get some fresh air and exercise if they don't have symptoms?

- Self-isolation orders are not suggestions or guidelines, they are now the law and they must be followed.
- You are not to leave your property, period.
- You can get fresh air in your backyard, if you have one, but you must remain on private property not accessible by others.
- Do not go for a walk in your neighbourhood or park. This includes children in mandatory self-isolation.
- If you live in an apartment building or highrise, you must stay inside and cannot use the elevators or stairwells to go outside. If your balcony is private and at least two metres away from your closest neighbour's, you may go outside on the balcony.

Can returning travellers use the elevator in their buildings to go outside or to take out their garbage/check their mail?

- No. If you live in an apartment building or highrise, you must stay inside and cannot use the elevators or stairwells to go outside for the duration of your self-isolation period.
- Ask friends or family to take out your garbage and check your mail.

What about people who are picking up international travelers (family, taxi/Uber drivers)?

- If the international traveller(s) are well, there should be no concern. If they are ill, they should be kept a safe distance from other passengers, if possible. The traveller(s) should also wear a mask, if possible.

I'm a tourist from another Canadian province/territory. Do these rules apply to me?

- Yes, it is now the law that any traveller returning from outside of the country must self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. If symptoms occur, they must remain in self-isolation an additional 10 days from the onset symptoms or until they're feeling better, whichever is longer.
- If symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.
- Anyone experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat linked to recent travel or other health concerns should contact Health Link 811.
- Anyone who is feeling ill, even if they have not travelled, must stay home and follow the mandatory self-isolation rules.
- If symptoms occur, complete a simple online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

How do I self-isolate if I'm staying in a bed-and-breakfast?

- If you are in mandatory self-isolation, even in a bed and breakfast, you must follow these steps:
 - Do not go to school, work, other public areas or community settings.
 - Do not go outside for a walk through your neighbourhood or park. This includes children in mandatory self-isolation.
 - If you are in an apartment building or highrise, you must stay inside and cannot use the elevators or stairwells to go outside. If your balcony is private and at least two metres away from your closest neighbour's, you may go outside on the balcony.
 - Avoid close contact with other household members, and especially seniors and those with chronic conditions, or a compromised immune system.

If a consumer has had to cancel a trip or vacation because of the COVID-19 pandemic, what recourse do they have?

- Questions over refunds and credits should be directed to your travel service provider, transportation carrier or the Canadian Transportation Agency.
- Their recourse depends on whether or not they obtained travel insurance for the trip.

What if they have travel insurance?

- They should read their policy closely and determine if its terms and conditions allow for a cancellation such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

But a pandemic is pretty unique. What if it's hard to tell if it's covered in the travel insurance policy or not?

- Albertans who have questions about travel insurance for their recent trip cancellations should first contact their insurers' ombudsoffices.
- The directory of insurers' ombudsoffice is available at alberta.ca (Path: Alberta.ca – Business and economy – Insurance, pensions and financial institutions – Insurance – Insurance-Information for consumers – Insurance consumer complaints – scroll down to about middle of the page and open pdf: [Alberta Insurers: List of Complaint liaison officers / ombudspersons, including contact information](#))
 - If matters remain unresolved, Albertans can also contact the OmbudService for Health and Life Insurance at [1-888-295-8112](tel:1-888-295-8112) or www.olhi.ca.

What about the Albertans who don't have travel insurance? What do they do?

- If people booked through their credit card, they should contact their credit card company to see if they can cancel it that way.
- Otherwise, check with the cancellation policy for the provider.

What if the provider has a cancellation policy but is refusing to honour it?

- If the complaint is regarding refunds on airfares (and airfare only), that is a federal matter and should be referred to Transport Canada.
- If a travel provider (or broker) has a refund/cancellation policy (for example, on a website, in brochures, etc.) or clause (in the contract) and they are refusing to honour that policy/clause, it could represent an unfair practice.
- In that case, a complaint could be filed with Service Alberta's Consumer Contact Centre at 1-877-427-4088.
 - If any investigation occurred, it would need to determine if the travel company violated the policies/clauses that were in place at the time the transaction was entered into.

What advice do you have for consumers who are experiencing delays or difficulties obtaining refunds on cancelled trips?

- There have been a range of changes in refund/cancellation policies as COVID-19 has progressed, so it's important to be patient with companies as they determine how best to handle customer requests for refunds.

MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Should I wear a mask to protect myself?

- Masks can be important in certain situations. When sick, wearing a mask helps prevent us from passing illnesses on to other people. This is why we ask people who have a cough or other respiratory symptoms to wear a mask when visiting an emergency department or clinic.
- If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended as they can give a false sense of security as they do not fully eliminate the risk of illness. Masks can easily become contaminated and need to be changed frequently and fitted properly for them to provide sufficient protection. If your hands aren't clean and are adjusting the face mask, you may be causing more harm than good.

What are n95 masks? Are they required?

- N95 masks are special protective masks that protect the wearer from airborne particles. These masks are recommended for health-care workers and people who are taking care of someone in close settings (at home or in a health-care facility). Alberta Health has [specific guidelines](#) for personal protective equipment for these roles. For the general public who will typically not find themselves in these settings, an N95 mask is not recommended.

Does the province have enough PPE? When will you run out?

- Alberta has been preparing for months, and has a stockpile of medical equipment available.
- One of the benefits of having a single, provincial healthcare system is that we are able to quickly and effectively respond to events such as this, both at a local level and at a provincial level when necessary.
- Alberta has a stockpile of equipment and medical/surgical supplies that is pre-positioned across the province, allowing for a quick and effective provincial response.
- AHS placed and received an order for additional PPE and other equipment in January, when the virus outbreak was largely limited to China and a select number of other countries.
- The federal government has also committed to help support additional supplies across the country.
- We are working with AHS to implement processes to ensure that our existing supplies are used shared with those who need it, while also being used as effectively as possible.

Are all family physicians getting PPE? Why not?

- Alberta Health and AHS support family doctors with personal protective equipment.
- With the increase in global spread, and travel-related cases in the province, we want to be sure that family doctors have access to personal protective equipment in a time when they are having difficulty ordering these supplies from their usual providers.
- Alberta Health Services zones will be working with primary care networks to move this forward, with priority given to those family doctors who are doing testing for COVID-19 in their offices.

- We are committed to working with physicians and other health care providers to ensure a collaborative response to the evolving COVID-19 outbreak.
- Alberta Health has [guidelines](#) available outlining the settings, people and activities where PPE is needed and what type PPE is needed.

There have been reports of nurses who swab being refused N95 masks. Why are they being refused? Are their jobs at risk if they do? Some say there is competing evidence on whether it's an aerosol generating virus so why not provide N95 masks to those asking for them to ensure nurses needed on the frontline don't get sick?

- We are confident that the guidelines and equipment we have in place will protect our workers from exposure to COVID19.
- We respect and appreciate that frontline workers may feel a certain degree of anxiousness when dealing with a new or emerging illness.
- The PPE and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidelines we have in place in Alberta are the most important steps to address both the risk, and the concerns.
- These guidelines are in alignment with both the Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization, and with other provinces and territories in Canada.
- COVID19 is not an airborne illness. It is an illness known to be transmitted by droplet, which means through contact with nasal and oral secretions from a person with the virus.
- The personal protective equipment guidelines in place in Alberta are the known best practice to protect against illnesses transmitted by droplet.
- Frontline workers who properly follow these practices will be protected.
- Since January AHS has expanded its fit testing capacity to ensure that providers' fit testing is up to date in accordance with our guidelines.
- Since January 1, 2020, more than 5,412 AHS frontline providers have been fit tested to a respirator. In the past two years, 45,151 AHS frontline providers have been fit tested to a respirator.

Is PPE being provided to first responders like firefighters, paramedics and other non-healthcare personnel? How do they get PPE if they need it?

- The Alberta government is coordinating province-wide requests from municipalities and select non-government organizations for personal protective equipment supplies for non-health related organizations and essential service providers.
- This equipment includes hand sanitizer, wipes, disinfectants, masks, gloves and safety eyewear. We are using Alberta suppliers as much as possible.

Do you have priorities for distribution ?

- Healthcare workers are our priority and we are ensuring they get the PPE needed so they can continue to do their good work.
- Groups that support vulnerable populations, child care operators, police and peace officers, municipal fire, protection services, emergency management staff, and critical infrastructure operators are now receiving PPE.
- Medical experts are reviewing all of the requests to ensure that what is being asked for aligns with best practices – for example, only healthcare workers need N95 masks.
- Organizations may not receive exactly what they have asked for, but they will receive what experts have deemed necessary for them to do their work safely.
- The general public is encouraged to continue to follow the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health – practice physical distancing, wash your hands, cough or sneeze into your elbow and avoid touching your face.

For local officials: How do municipalities get requests to the Government?

- Municipalities and service providers can send requests for personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer to pessecc-logistics@gov.ab.ca. Medical experts will triage and assess the requests and determine actual need based on medical guidelines.

Do clinic staffers gear up in haz mat suits or other measures?

- At this time, the novel coronavirus appears to be spread by droplets and contact, so standard contact and droplet precautions would be taken.
- This includes the [appropriate personal protective equipment](#) such as gloves, a long-sleeved gown, surgical mask and eye protection.
- These are routine practices that are also used when treating influenza or any other severe respiratory illness.

HEALTH LINK 811

Why are you asking people to complete a self-assessment and then call Health Link 811? Shouldn't I go to the hospital if I have symptoms?

- Individuals with symptoms and at risk of COVID-19 (such as travellers returning from outside of Canada), should not visit emergency departments or urgent care centres to avoid potential spreading of the virus.
- Individuals with symptoms are asked to first use Alberta Health Services' simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide the individual to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- Calling Health Link 811 is the best way to arrange for quick assessment and testing, if required.

What is being done to address Health Link wait times?

- Alberta Health Services has developed a simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help individuals decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The online assessment tool will guide the individual to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- Health Link continues to be critical to the COVID-19 response and case management.
- Health Link is regularly receiving more than 5,700 calls a day. Given this volume, wait times can be high, particularly during peak times of 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. and 6 a.m. – 10 p.m.
- We are working hard to manage wait times. Health Link is training additional clinical staff to join the Health Link team rapidly, to provide dedicated additional COVID-19 support.
- We know that waiting times can be frustrating and thank the public for continued patience. Albertans can help the call volumes by
 - considering visiting alberta.ca/covid for information, if you do not need a health assessment.
 - calling Health Link during non-peak times, if possible, for those who need a health assessment.
 - if you are awaiting COVID test results, please do not call Health Link.
- Health Link does not have access to test results. If you have been tested for COVID, you will be called directly with your test results.
- It's important for Albertans to understand what COVID-19 is and what it means for them. Anyone looking for information about COVID-19, including what it means for them, how to prepare, or how to protect themselves, can find that info on alberta.ca/COVID19.

FOOD HANDLING

What is being done to focus on food processing facilities?

- It's important to remember COVID-19 is not a food-borne pathogen.
- This is not to dismiss the importance of all food processing facilities following appropriate food handling precautions in accordance with Food Regulations and other applicable provincial and federal legislation.
 - Precautions include cleanliness, good personal hygiene, and proper hand washing as often as necessary to prevent contamination of food or food areas.
 - Employees must stay home if they show any COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, or runny nose.

Do people need to take steps to disinfect purchased goods (particularly stuff like fruit and vegetables) above and beyond what they'd normally do?

- The virus is primarily transmitted through person-to-person spread by larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze.
- It can also be passed by touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- While the virus can live under ideal circumstances (such as on stainless steel) for several days, it is generally only live on surfaces like paper or plastic for a few hours.
- There is no evidence of the virus being spread by packaging mail, grocery goods or other items.
- As always the best steps to prevent transmission is for Albertans to wash their hands, regularly clean surfaces and follow the other recommended steps on alberta.ca/COVID19.

Are there precautions we should take when having take out food or having it delivered in?

- You should take the food out of the packaging it came in, transfer it to a plate and throw the packaging away. Then wash your hands for 20 seconds before eating the food.

Are farmer's markets still allowed to operate?

- Alberta's Chief Medical Officer and the team at Alberta Health are continually assessing the risk of exposure to COVID-19 to ensure Albertans are as safe as possible.
- While some farmer's markets remain open, Albertans are reminded to reduce the number of times they leave their house to perform errands, to only go to farmer's markets, shopping malls or other public spaces if necessary, and to maintain physical distancing and limit the amount of time they spend in crowded spaces. A tip sheet on physical distancing is available on the Government of Alberta website at: <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-social-distancing-fact-sheet.pdf>
- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.
- Farmer's markets must have mitigation in place such as sanitizer stations and thorough cleaning procedures.
- Albertans have been prohibited from attending some businesses. Check online for the latest details on business, workplaces and facility closures.
- Businesses that can continue to provide services at locations accessible to the public must have proper risk mitigation measures in place, such as sanitation stations and appropriate distancing between customers.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND PANDEMIC PLANNING

- A Public Health Emergency was declared March 17, 2020.
- The Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services are using emergency response processes. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency Provincial Operations Centre is at a Level 4 (of 4). This means a mandated co-ordination by the Government of Alberta during a significant incident. It involves a full activation of POC by all of government and public safety partners.

FURTHER RESTRICTIONS ON MASS GATHERINGS

What is a mass gathering?

- A mass gathering is any event or assembling that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, place of worship, large conference room, meeting hall, cafeteria, theater, or any other confined indoor or confined outdoor space.

What are the most current mass gathering restrictions?

- As of March 27, mass gatherings are restricted to 15 people, and people must maintain physical distancing by staying two meters apart.
- Further details on gathering restrictions are available [online](#).

Why did the government change mass gatherings restrictions from 50 to 15?

- This was an extremely difficult decision to make, but we need to do everything we can to protect the safety of Albertans and limit the spread of COVID-19. This includes doing everything we can to limit Albertans' contact with others who may have and spread the virus.
- These changes are in response to the increased concern of community spread and asymptomatic transmission we have been seeing in Alberta.
- Moving from 50 to 15 brings Alberta in line with restrictions in place in several other provinces.

What type of gatherings do the restrictions apply to?

- This includes:
 - Open spaces, such as trails, fields, and parks; and
 - Public and private gatherings where people are brought together in a single room or space at the same time, including funerals, weddings, and other informal events.
- This does not include workspaces that are not otherwise restricted or ordered to close. These workspaces can have more than 15 workers on a worksite as long as they follow all public health guidance.

Can I continue going to daily prayer service at my place of worship?

- We recognize Albertans need a place to worship together in their various religious traditions, in a way that doesn't put people at risk of spreading or contracting COVID-19.
- Gathering together with fewer than 15 people can still happen as long as proper mitigation measures are followed, and people maintain a 6 feet distance from each other.
- Faith-based organizations are encouraged to find other ways to worship, including live streaming activities instead of in-person events, whenever possible.
- More information can be found in the [guidance document for faith-based organizations][https://webcms1v11.gov.ab.ca/CMS/ckeditor/\[ioID\]28E0ADE779EB46BD9807A6A24E2B3474/covid-19-fact-sheet-faith-based-organizations.pdf](https://webcms1v11.gov.ab.ca/CMS/ckeditor/[ioID]28E0ADE779EB46BD9807A6A24E2B3474/covid-19-fact-sheet-faith-based-organizations.pdf)] (PDF, 194 KB)

Should events like weddings, birthday parties, meetings, etc. just be cancelled? Should these types of events still proceed?

- Smaller events with 15 or fewer people can still proceed, but risk mitigation must be in place, such as:
 - Reducing the number of participants or changing the venue to prevent crowding;
 - Recommend those at high-risk of severe disease not attend the event;
 - Staggering arrivals and departures;
 - Providing packaged refreshments instead of a buffet;
 - Increasing access to handwashing stations;
 - Clean surfaces often that are frequently touched;
 - Promoting personal protective practices (hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, staying home if ill);

- Offering virtual or live-streamed activities; and
- Changing the event program to reduce high risk activities such as those that require physical contact between participants.
- You must cancel gatherings with fewer than 15 people if the event:
 - includes any attendees travelling from outside of Canada
 - has, as its focus, attendees that are members of critical infrastructure or critical service roles (e.g. healthcare workers, first responders, electric/power workers, telecommunications)
 - includes attendees from demographic groups at greater risk of severe disease, such as people 60 years of age or older and individuals with chronic medical conditions
 - has attendees participating in activities that promote disease transmission (e.g. singing, cheering, close contact, sharing food or beverages, buffet style meals)
 - is in a space that does not allow for recommended social distancing (at least 2 metres between attendees)
- This includes worship gatherings and family events, such as weddings and funerals.

Can I take my kids to the playground?

- Some municipalities, including Calgary, Edmonton and Lethbridge, have closed their school playgrounds to the public.
- As much as possible, we strongly encourage you to limit social interaction, particularly where it will be hard to maintain physical distance and expose you and your child to surfaces that may not be sanitary.
- If you are considering going to an outdoor playground in a jurisdiction that hasn't closed its playgrounds, we recommend cleaning your and your child's hands with hand sanitizer at the end of your playground visit before travelling home, and immediately washing your and your child's hands with warm soapy water when you get home.
- Practice physical distancing, and stay 6 feet away from other people.

What about international events?

- As of March 27 all large gatherings of more than 15 people or international events in the province are to be cancelled.
- Travel outside of the country is also restricted, and Albertans should not travel out of Canada unless absolutely necessary. Given the rapid global spread of the virus, it is no longer possible to assess health risks for the duration of the trip.
- All Albertans should practise good hygiene, such as frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least twenty seconds, and should stay home if feeling ill.
- It's important to remember that COVID-19 is not airborne. It is spread by droplets or touching surfaces and then touching your face, so close contact is required.
- In the event of someone testing positive for COVID-19, or being a close contact, AHS will contact anyone at risk.
- Please visit alberta.ca/COVID19 for up-to-date information.

Some gatherings are being closed that don't fit the provincial guidelines. Why?

- We are taking COVID-19 extremely seriously, and acting quickly to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe and healthy.
- In light of the extraordinary circumstances, we have issued a public health order on mass gatherings to limit the potential spread of COVID-19.
- Local authorities may choose to close additional areas or facilities at their discretion, but may not relax or reduce the provincial restrictions.

What kind of gatherings are exempt?

- Certain essential services and facilities – these facilities must still follow risk mitigation strategies
- Public transit – if 2 metres of physical distancing is observed

RESTRICTIONS ON NON-ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES

What are the restrictions on business?

- As of March 27, attendance at certain businesses and organizations across the province is prohibited.

What businesses are affected by the restrictions?

- Restrictions are now in place for the following classifications of businesses:
 - Close contact businesses including:
 - hair salons and barbershops, tattoo and piercing studios, esthetic services;
 - wellness studios and clinics and non-emergency and non-critical health services provided by regulated health professionals or registered professionals including dentistry, physiotherapy, massage, podiatry, chiropractic and optometry services.
 - Dine-in restaurants will no longer be able to offer service. Take-out and delivery services will continue to be available.
 - Non-essential retail services that fall into the categories of clothing, computers and gaming stores, and services in shopping malls and shopping centres such as hobby and toys, gift and specialty items and furniture.

A more complete list of impacted businesses can be found [online](#).

- All other businesses and facilities that have previously been ordered to close remain closed, including public recreation facilities and private entertainment facilities.
 - This includes gyms, swimming pools, arenas, science centres, museums, art galleries, community centres, children's play centres, casinos, racing entertainment centres and bingo halls.

What happens if a business that's supposed to close doesn't?

- Any business or organization not following the public health order will be subject to a fine. Courts have the power to administer fines of up to \$100,000 for a first offence and up to \$500,000 for a subsequent offence for more serious violations.
- We are calling on every Albertan and organization to assist our public health efforts and do their very best to comply with the public health guidance.
- Anyone aware of a business violating these orders should submit a complaint [online](#) immediately.

How long will these restrictions on businesses be in place?

- Due to the evolving COVID-19 situation, government has ordered certain types of businesses to close effective March 27 and remain closed until further notice. For more information, visit <https://www.alberta.ca/restrictions-on-gatherings-and-businesses.aspx>
- We encourage businesses to explore opportunities to continue operations through work-from-home and innovative business models.

What if I think my business should be closed, but they're still asking me to report to work?

- A list of essential workplaces is available [online](#).
- You are encouraged to discuss the situation with your employer.
- If your employer is not following the Public Health Order regarding closure of all non-essential services, violating these orders should submit a complaint [online](#) immediately.

Do restrictions apply to public rest stops? Private campsites?

- See the directions regarding mass gatherings – nothing over 15 people. But these particular facilities are neither private entertainment facilities or recreation facilities and therefore do not have to close.

Will shopping malls with essential retailers such as pharmacies, etc. be allowed to stay open?

- Essential retailers located within shopping centres can remain open; however, access to common areas of indoor shopping malls is restricted, and thoroughfares must be monitored to limit the number of people in these areas.

Do these restrictions apply to informal services that don't involve close contact, like dog walking, babysitting, Uber, etc.?

- No, they don't apply to these types of informal businesses, but physical distancing – keeping a distance of at least 2 metres – must be practiced.

Are outdoor recreation facilities, like archery ranges, included in the restrictions on rec facilities?

- Albertans have been asked not to attend some businesses at this time. Check online for the latest details on [business, workplaces and facility closures](#).
- Businesses that can continue to provide services at locations accessible to the public must have no more than 15 people at the business at one time and have proper risk mitigation measures in place, such as sanitation stations and appropriate distancing between customers.

What about long-term care facilities? Can I still go and visit my family members?

- We are taking COVID-19 extremely seriously, and acting quickly to minimize risk and keep Albertans safe and healthy.
- Individuals over 60 years of age and those with pre-existing health conditions are most at risk of severe symptoms from COVID-19.
- Visitors to any continuing care, long-term care and seniors lodges in Alberta are limited to essential visitors only.
- Families and friends of those in these facilities to think of other ways besides visiting that they can support and encourage their loved ones through this difficult time.

What about visits to congregate living sites?

- Effective immediately, we are restricting visitors to all congregate living sites.
- Residents are at extreme risk if exposed to COVID-19.
- We are asking that visitors are restricted to one or two people at a time and that those visitors be immediate family or designated support persons only.
- This will reduce the risk of loved ones being exposed to COVID-19.
- We ask you to also restrict visitation of children as children do not necessarily show symptoms of COVID-19.

Should I still go to work?

- If your place of work is open, and you are not experiencing symptoms, you can go to work as usual.
- Practicing good hygiene is the most important thing Albertans can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This includes cleaning your hands regularly, avoiding touching your face, and staying home and away from others if you are sick.
- Anyone with specific health questions or concerns should call Health Link at 811 for assessment and health advice.

BLOOD DONATIONS

Can people still donate blood during the pandemic?

- The need for blood donors remains strong. It is safe to donate blood during COVID-19 and donations can help save lives.
- Blood donor centres across Canada are places of wellness within Canada's health system.
- Blood donation can help address the feeling of helplessness people have in the face of COVID-19. Gaining a sense of control during this situation can help contribute to an overall sense of wellbeing.
- To learn more, visit Canadian Blood Services website at: blood.ca

BILLING CODE FOR DOCTORS

Is there a new billing code for doctors to use when they are dealing with COVID-19 remotely?

- Alberta Health has activated a billing code, known as 03.01AD, which was also used during the H1N1 response. Physicians have received a bulletin on the code which will allow them to bill for phone calls they are receiving regarding COVID-19.

ESSENTIAL SERVICE WORKERS

How was the list of essential versus non-services determined?

- Essential services are public services that if interrupted would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the public. These services are also necessary to the maintenance and administration of the rule of law and public security.
- A list of workplaces considered as essential during the COVID-19 pandemic is available [online](#).

Should essential services workers – police, firefighters, nurses, doctors, paramedics, etc. – be going to work if they feel ill?

- We encourage all Albertans with flu-like symptoms such as a fever, cough, sore throat, or runny nose, no matter where they work, to self-isolate for 10 days from the start of their symptoms. Testing is not required to follow this advice. We continue to look at our testing capacity and how best we can use the resources available.

What should essential service workers do when returning from travel?

- For essential service workers who are feeling well but returned from travel in the last 14 days, some groups have been granted exemptions as long as they continue to feel well, with extra mitigating measures in place to prevent the possibility of spread should they start to feel ill at work. Exemptions are assessed on a case-by-case basis for specific groups of essential service workers.

Are there any new rules in place preventing workers front-line health care facilities, like long-term care facilities, from working in multiple facilities?

- As of yet, there have been no changes to the rules for working in multiple facilities. Workers are asked to stay home if they are sick.

If my employer provides essential services and I am reporting to work, do I need to provide or carry any sort of documentation with me?

- No. If your place of work is deemed essential, you do not need to carry any sort of documentation with you when travelling to and from work or while at work.

If my business/organization is defined as providing essential services, do I need a certificate or any documentation to continue my brick-and-mortar operations?

- No. If your business/organization is on the [list of essential services](#), you do not need to take any action and do not require a certificate or documentation to remain open.
- All essential services must have proper risk mitigation measures in place such as sanitizer stations and appropriate distancing between customers.
- Anyone who must access essential services is to practice safe physical distancing and good hand hygiene. If you feel unwell stay home.

PHARMACEUTICALS

There are reports of people stockpiling medication. What is the government doing in response?

- To ensure Albertans continue to have access to essential medications and to help pharmacists address this situation, we will be recommending that pharmacies provide a maximum 30-day supply of prescription drugs.
- We recognize this means that Albertans will need to refill their prescriptions more often.
- Albertans should speak with their pharmacist about when it is appropriate to fill their prescriptions.
- To assist with the added cost, those with Alberta government-sponsored drug coverage will pay a lower co-payment of up to \$8 per prescription for a 30 day supply. The current co-payment is up to \$25 per prescription.
- Other provinces are implementing similar supply measures to ensure a consistent approach across the country.

Should people take ibuprofen for COVID-19 symptoms?

- Currently, there is no strong evidence to indicate ibuprofen could make COVID-19 symptoms worse, beyond the usual known side effects that limit the use of ibuprofen in certain populations.
- Until we have more information, people may wish to take paracetamol/acetaminophen to treat COVID-19 symptoms, unless your doctor has told you paracetamol/acetaminophen is not suitable for you.
- Those already taking ibuprofen for other conditions should not stop without consulting a doctor.

DENTAL HEALTH

Are we going to direct dental offices to close?

- The Alberta Dental Association and College have introduced a mandatory suspension of all non-emergency dental treatment and services. However, dentists may continue to provide emergency treatment, but must take proper risk mitigation.
- You can call the dental association and college: <https://www.dentalhealthalberta.ca/> for information.
- Do not go to the ER for emergency dental issues.

BABYLON BY TELUS HEALTH APP

Is this an example of investing in a private company to take over health care services?

- No. Through this program, our government continues to invest in publicly funded health care. While TELUS will hire the physicians, government is paying their salaries through an alternate relationship plan (ARP).

Will this program save the province money?

- The province will see some cost-savings because the program will reduce the number of emergency room visits. The program makes physicians more accessible to Albertans who don't have their own family doctor or who live in a community with limited health care services.
- Being able to consult with a physician virtually means fewer visits to more costly walk-in clinics and hospital emergency rooms.
- The app also has an AI-powered symptom checker. It's available 24/7 and, where appropriate, can offer other courses of action for patients that would eliminate the need to see a doctor.
- The program is also an ARP, which supports government's commitment to take a smarter approach to promoting innovation and attracting investment in the health sector. Both of these things can lead to better efficiencies in health care.

How can an app take the place of an in-person consultation with a real-life physician?

- Patients who use the app meet in real-time with real-life physicians who are licensed to practice medicine in Alberta.
- In a virtual visit, physicians can provide many of the same services as a doctor would during an in-person visit, including a video-based physical exam that looks at general appearance, breathing, joint colour and range of motion, hydration status, mental status exam, skin lesions, ability to bear weight, activity level, extra-ocular movements, facial symmetry, tremors and more.
- Physicians who consult with patients using the app can also order prescriptions, labs, imaging or referrals if required.

Is there a fee for a virtual appointment?

- There is no charge for patients who have Alberta Health Care to visit a physician using the app.

How are you going to find physicians to participate in this program? Physicians are leaving the province and you're having trouble attracting new ones.

- This program will actually alleviate some of the physician shortages Alberta is experiencing in some areas.
- Using the app, Albertans anywhere in the province can consult with a physician. The app will make it easier for Albertans who would otherwise find it difficult to meet with or even find a physician. This includes those who live in rural or more isolated areas where health care is limited, people who don't have a family physician, and those who have mobility or travel issues.

Will "virtual physicians" be less qualified?

- TELUS Health typically hires physicians who have at least three years experience. Many of them already have established practices in the community and have the capacity to take on more patients. All physicians are licensed to practice Medicine in Alberta.

Is the government paying TELUS as a private clinic?

- Our government isn't paying TELUS anything. We are paying the salaries of physicians participating in Babylon, just as we publicly fund all Alberta physicians. The ARP is an alternative compensation model that provides a more stable way for physicians to be paid.

If pay is comparable, why would a physician switch from the fee-for-service model to this ARP?

- This ARP, like many ARPs, offers benefits beyond monetary compensation. This is a good fit for physicians who have capacity to add patients to their practice. And it would appeal to those who want the flexibility to spend more time with patients, such as those with complex needs, for example, without reducing the compensation they receive.
- ARPs also remove the need for the physician to act as gatekeeper. Babylon by TELUS uses a multi-disciplinary team – including family physicians, nurse practitioners, mental health therapists, dieticians, clinical operators and support staff. Patients are directed to the most appropriate provider, so the physician does not have to attend every appointment.

How does this program work with family physicians or primary care networks? How will they be connected or will they work together?

- The virtual clinic supports continuity of patient information. The health information of patients who consult with physicians using the app will be integrated to their Electronic Health Record and, with a patient's consent, shared with their family physician.

How will you ensure privacy of medical patients is protected? Will TELUS, a private company, be in charge of our data?

- Over 80 per cent of Electronic Medical Records in Alberta are managed using Telus-owned technology. TELUS has three EMR platforms available to physicians, and that adds a layer of complexity as health information from EMRs is integrated to each Albertans' individual Electronic Health Record.

Will physicians in this program only spend a minimal amount of time on visits with patients?

- There is no set time limit associated with a consultation.

Has this program been successful elsewhere?

- Babylon by TELUS launched in B.C. in March 2019. The app has been downloaded more than 100,000 times. TELUS can't provide specific numbers of patients who have used the virtual clinics because of confidentiality, but they say it's in the tens of thousands since it launched.

Can Albertans living in other provinces use this app? For example, can an Alberta snowbird in Arizona see an Alberta physician this way?

- If you're traveling outside of Canada, you can access the symptom checker and your medical records using the app, but you won't be able to make an appointment to see a physician.
- If you're traveling in Canada, in most cases you will be able to consult with a licensed physician using the app. However, there are cases where this might not be possible due to provincial or territorial differences in regulation or processes.

How do physicians sign up to be a part of this program?

- Physicians can learn more about joining the team at Babylon by TELUS here: [Babylon by Telus website](#).
- Interested groups of physicians can call 780-643-1436 (or 310 first for toll-free access) or email health.arpinfo@gov.ab.ca for more information on applying for an ARP.

How does this app, with virtual doctors, help foster people to develop a patient/physician relationship?

- Continuity of care includes both the sharing of information between providers and patients and an ongoing relationship between a doctor and a patient. Babylon will augment the services offered by our current physician community.
- For example, Babylon will be available evenings and weekends and reduce visits to emergency rooms for patients who lack transportation. Babylon will be part of NetCare and will, along with other initiatives, allow physicians to know when their patients have been seen by other providers.

Was there an open bidding process & RFP to develop this service?

- No. Telus Babylon is provided through an ARP. TELUS Health approached the ministry before the pandemic to make this service available in Alberta. Their application was processed within our standard timelines of 6-8 weeks.
- TELUS Health, which is a health care provider, applied to Alberta Health to offer its services through an ARP to Alberta patients. Applications for ARPs are open on a continuous basis. We are always looking to increase the number of ARPs available in Alberta.

How were the participating AB-licensed doctors recruited?

- Telus Health is recruiting physicians to work in their virtual clinic. Participating physicians must be licensed to work in Alberta.

What is their rate of pay?

- Like all ARPs, the rate of pay a physician receives is a matter between the authorized representative, in this case Babylon's medical director, and individual physicians.

What is the value of the ARP negotiated to deliver this service?

- TELUS Health is receiving approximately \$1.5 million annually to provide this service for 36,000 visits. The compensation rate was based on the current visit code for family medicine.

Is Babylon intended to replace family MDs in clinics that are currently struggling to provide virtual care in the midst of this pandemic at a rate that doesn't cover their ongoing costs and overhead?

- No, it's intended to provide additional capacity to the system.

Were they offered a chance to participate in the initiative?

- TELUS Health is currently recruiting physicians.

HOME CARE

Is Alberta Health Services (AHS) cancelling Home Care?

- AHS is not cancelling Home Care. That is a very important service, for many Albertans, particularly during this challenging time.
- Just as with other areas of the healthcare system, we are experiencing some staffing challenges due to people self-isolating, or staying home to look after their children. That's understandable. This challenge will be ongoing, not just in home care, but in many other areas.
- Home Care staff are working closely with each client to discuss potential impacts and to determine what essential services still need to be provided. This may include establishing back-up plans, or involving a family member in supporting some of a client's care needs.
- All AHS Home Care staff have appropriate PPE and follow proper donning and doffing procedures and hand washing techniques to protect themselves and their clients.
- If a client is symptomatic and the backup plan is not feasible to implement, and/or care services are considered essential, Home Care staff will continue to provide care using appropriate PPE and following proper donning and doffing protocols.

POC and PESS

Donations and offers to provide services (for a fee, or for free)

How can we make an offer of goods or services?

- Many Albertans are offering to provide goods or services to the Government of Alberta or Alberta communities to help manage COVID-19.
- Please check local community support organizations if your offer is for a specific community.
- Albertans can also complete the information on this page to communicate an offer to emergency management and emergency social services professionals addressing provincewide impacts: alberta.ca/COVID19offersprogram

Provincial supply of Personal Protective Equipment

How do we obtain personal protective equipment from the Government ?

- The Government of Alberta is coordinating province-wide requests from municipalities and select non-government organizations for personal protective equipment supplies for non-health related organizations and essential service providers.
- This equipment includes hand sanitizer, wipes, disinfectants, masks, gloves and safety eyewear. We are using Alberta suppliers as much as possible.

Do you have priorities for distribution ?

- Healthcare workers are our priority and we are ensuring they get the PPE needed so they can continue to do their good work.
- Groups that support vulnerable populations, child care operators, police and peace officers, municipal fire, protection services, emergency management staff, and critical infrastructure operators are now receiving PPE.
- Medical experts are reviewing all of the requests to ensure that what is being asked for aligns with best practices – for example, only healthcare workers **need** N95 masks.
- Organizations may not receive exactly what they have asked for, but they will receive what experts have deemed necessary for them to do their work safely.
- The general public is encouraged to continue to follow the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health – practice physical distancing, wash your hands, cough or sneeze into your elbow and avoid touching your face.

How do we make requests to the Government?

- Local authorities and service providers can send requests for personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer to pessecc-logistics@gov.ab.ca. Medical experts will triage and assess the requests and determine actual need based on medical guidelines.

Area closures by local authorities)

Why has my city/town closed places that aren't specifically spelled out in the directions from the Chief Medical Officer of Health?

- Local authorities may choose to close additional facilities at their discretion, but may not relax or reduce the provincial restrictions.

NON-COVID-19 HEALTHCARE

I don't have COVID-19 symptoms and I need medical assistance for another reason, but I can't get treatment (medicentres are closed/doctors are turning patients away/I can't get through to Health Link)...what do I do?

- We understand the strain that COVID-19 is causing on many Albertans. If your family physician or other health-care provider is unable or unwilling to receive you, we recommend you contact another health-care provider to find out if they are available.
- To find a family doctor near you who is accepting new patients, Primary Care Networks and the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta offer online tools. Visit <https://albertafindadoctor.ca/> and <https://search.cpsa.ca/physiciansearch>
- We recommend any non-essential visits are postponed at this time.
- You may also download the Babylon by Telus Health App.

I was supposed to get an MRI not related to COVID-19. Will that still happen?

- As of March 28 Alberta Health Services is postponing any diagnostic imaging procedures that are considered non-urgent by the ordering physician. This will help limit opportunities for the virus to spread.
- However, anyone needing an urgent or emergent outpatient CT and MRI scan will still receive one.
- As well, Alberta Precision Laboratories and DynaLIFE are asking physicians and community providers to immediately stop all non-essential and routine laboratory testing.
- Again, any bloodwork critical to a patient's immediate care will continue to be tested.
- We must free up more lab space for our aggressive COVID-19 testing.

AS AHS is no longer providing diagnostic imaging services for non-urgent exams, are there any recommendations for private DI clinics? Are follow-ups or certain conditions like fatty livers, prostate size and lipoma considered worth sacrificing social distancing recommendations?

- The community imaging clinics continue to offer services in a reduced capacity to accommodate imaging still needed. It is important that patients discuss the clinical urgency with their physician as to whether the exam should be done during the pandemic. If the patient has any symptoms they should try to delay imaging until they are symptom free as per the guidelines.

I require physio every 2 to 3 weeks. Is this considered essential health care?

- Contact your physiotherapist or chiropractor to discuss whether or not your care is considered urgent or essential.

Can I travel to the US for a pre-scheduled medical treatment?

- If you have applied to receive out-of-country health services through the Out-of-Country Health Services Committee, you should first contact the Alberta physician or dentist who submitted the application for you to determine next steps.