

COVID-19 (NOVEL CORONAVIRUS) as of April 19 AT 6PM

COVID-19 – THE DISEASE, SYMPTOMS, ITS SPREAD, TESTING AND PRECAUTIONS	2
TESTING.....	5
ISOLATION.....	7
ENFORCEMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS	9
TRAVEL AND RETURNING TRAVELLERS	11
MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)	13
HEALTH LINK 811	17
FOOD HANDLING	18
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND PANDEMIC PLANNING	19
RESTRICTIONS ON MASS GATHERINGS	19
RESTRICTIONS ON BUSINESSES	22
BLOOD DONATIONS.....	25
BILLING CODE FOR DOCTORS	25
ESSENTIAL SERVICE WORKERS.....	25
PHARMACEUTICALS	26
DENTAL HEALTH.....	27
Pregnancy and nursing	27
HOME CARE	29
DONATIONS OF GOODS/SERVICES	29
AREA CLOSURES BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES.....	30
COMMUNICATING WITH ALBERTANS	31

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

What is COVID-19?

- COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) is the official name for the disease causing the novel coronavirus outbreak, first identified in Wuhan, China and now spreading around the world.

What is a novel coronavirus?

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

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza and other respiratory illnesses.
- Mild symptoms include 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.
- Most people (about 80%) recover without needing medical treatment. Older people and those with other medical problems are more likely to develop serious symptoms. There is a risk of death in severe cases.
- Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19.

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

- Mild symptoms include 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.

How does COVID-19 spread?

- COVID-19 is spread by those 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 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.

There seem to be more cases announced that come from community transmission. Should we be really worried?

- Although we have announced additional cases in this particular group recently, the increase in number actually reflects a change in our approach to testing.
- Alberta has expanded access to COVID-19 laboratory tests to better trace the spread of the novel coronavirus. In addition to testing in hard-hit areas and testing of vulnerable Albertans and essential workers, any individual exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat or shortness of breath, is now eligible for testing.
- Lab services have been working through a backlog of swabs that were waiting to be tested.
- The sudden increase we have seen recently represents the date the lab completed the test and not when the person became ill.

What is the difference between “probable” cases and “confirmed” cases of COVID-19?

Confirmed cases are those who have been tested and found positive for the virus. Probable cases are ones who haven't been tested but are symptomatic and have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive.

What precautions should Albertans take to stay healthy?

- To protect yourself and others:
 - practise [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
 - [isolate](#) for 14 days if you were exposed to COVID-19 or have returned from travel outside Canada. If symptoms occur, you must remain in isolation for an additional 10 days from the onset your symptoms or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer
 - isolate for at least 10 days if you are experiencing a COVID-19 symptom not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition.
 - If you are tested and the result is negative for COVID-19, you are not legally required to isolate.

What is the best way to practise physical distancing?

- Keep at least **two metres (six feet, or about 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; **visits to the grocery store should be kept to once a week**

- Try to have only one person in the household do the shopping
- 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 gatherings
- Wash or sanitize your hands after touching communal surfaces
- A [fact sheet](#) on physical distancing is available [online](#)

Can I still carpool with friends and work colleagues?

- All Albertans are encouraged to maintain physical distancing as much as possible.
- If you carpool, it's recommended to stagger seating and practice good hygiene.

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

- Once a case is confirmed, AHS immediately conducts a risk assessment of anyone who may have come in close contact with them. Close contacts are required to isolate.
- Anyone not contacted is not at risk and does not need to take any additional measures.
- All Albertans should practice physical distancing and good hygiene when in public.

We've been told there a case in X? Is this accurate? Can you confirm?

- We cannot provide information regarding specific cases due to patient confidentiality. We take patient confidentiality seriously and are taking steps to balance confidentiality with the public interest. We cannot comment on any specific case due to patient confidentiality.
- In cases like this, as soon as a test is positive, local health officials take immediate action to protect the health of everyone involved and prevent the virus from spreading. They immediately isolate the individual and begin contact tracing to determine anyone who may have been exposed to the virus.
- Anyone at risk of being exposed is directly contacted by AHS and required to isolate. Anyone who has not been contacted is not at risk.
- It's important to remember that this virus is spread by close contact. It is not airborne like measles, so the sort of general notifications used for diseases like measles are not appropriate.
- In the rare event where health officials determine there is a broader risk to anyone who may have attended a specific site, we promptly alert Albertans. An example of this was the BC dental conference in March.
- Our top priority is protecting the health of Albertans.

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?

- Alberta has expanded access to COVID-19 laboratory tests to better trace the spread of the virus. In addition to testing in hard-hit areas and testing of vulnerable Albertans and essential workers, any individual exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, fever, runny nose, sore throat or shortness of breath is now eligible for testing.
 - AHS will begin testing asymptomatic residents and staff in continuing care facilities that are experiencing outbreaks, or asymptomatic essential worker populations likewise experiencing outbreaks.
- People can access testing by completing the COVID-19 [self-assessment online](#).
- A separate [self-assessment tool](#) is available for health care and shelter workers, enforcement and first responders.
- The chief medical officer of health will continue to examine and adjust testing protocols and access to COVID-19 tests based on the changing situation in Alberta.

How is the province determining who should be tested?

- In addition to completing as many tests as possible, we are being purposeful in our testing in order to:
 - diagnose and treat individuals at greatest risk
 - trace the spread of the virus so we can identify steps to limit the spread
 - determine how well our public health measures are working

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

- Mild symptoms include 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.

Is Alberta's current testing capacity enough?

- Alberta has expanded its capacity for testing. There have been 101,323 COVID-19 tests completed, with 4,426 tests completed in the last 24 hours.
- This includes opening assessment centres, where needed, increasing the number of nurses at Health Link 811 and procuring additional lab equipment.
- Alberta Health Services developed a simple online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to help people decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The tool will guide people to answer questions about their symptoms and take them through steps to help determine whether they need testing.
- We continue 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.

Part of the Relaunch Strategy will involve turning around as many as 20,000 COVID-19 tests a day.

How does the province plan to achieve this?

- We currently have capacity for testing up to 7,400 swabs per day – these are the tests that diagnose current illness.
- The lab is working to get more machines and test supplies to be able to increase our capacity to test people with swabs to 9,000 per day by the end of the month, and with new machines coming in May, we anticipate being able to test double that by the end of May.
- In addition, we will be adding blood testing to our labs as soon as validated tests are available. Blood testing will be used to determine who has been infected in the past and has antibodies against the virus.
- These two types of tests together will have us at 20,000 capacity daily by the end of May.

Where is the testing being done?

- All Alberta COVID-19 testing happens in labs in Edmonton and Calgary.

Where are the assessment centres?

- We don't share exact locations as we don't want to confuse people who may believe they can walk in.
- These are not walk-in clinics. Those referred to these clinics are provided with location specifics.
- There are 12 locations across the province.
- General locations:
 - 3 in Edmonton
 - 4 in Calgary
 - 1 in Red Deer
 - 1 in Camrose
 - 1 in Lethbridge
 - 1 in Lloydminster
 - 1 in Medicine Hat
 - North Zone is currently doing assessment in the community either through public health centres or home visits
- For testing data, visit <https://covid19stats.alberta.ca>.

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.
- After being swabbed, they drive home and self-isolate until they get their results.
- This model has shown to work well in other jurisdictions. Feedback is it is more convenient for those being tested, with no need to enter a clinic or for patients to don PPE.
- It eliminates spending time in a waiting room -- reducing risk of transmission -- and increases our capacity to test.

Can we (MEDIA) go visit one?

- No. 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 we protect patient privacy and 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 all precautions to ensure 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, ensuring that COVID-19 is not transmitted to staff or other patients.
- Those who visit the centres for referred testing must wear masks, and all staff at the site also wear masks, gowns and all other necessary personal protective equipment.
- Enhanced cleaning procedures address the risk of droplet contact transmission on surfaces.

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

- Testing volumes are extremely high right now.
- Please keep 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.

ISOLATION

Who needs to isolate?

- You are legally required to isolate if:
 - you returned from travelling outside of Canada. You must isolate for 14 days from your return. If symptoms occur, you must remain in isolation for an additional 10 days from the onset of 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 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 isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.
 - If you are tested and the result is negative for COVID-19, you are not legally required to isolate.

On which day does the 14-day 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 isolating?

- The rules around mandatory isolation have been clarified to better protect all Albertans. Anyone under mandatory isolation must stay indoors and 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 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. Taking public transportation is legally prohibited.
 - Watch for symptoms like fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose or difficulty breathing in yourself or a family member.
 - Should any symptoms occur, complete an online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.
- [For more information, consult the isolation guidelines.](#)

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

- At this time, other household members are not required to isolate, but they should monitor for symptoms (and isolate if symptoms occur).
- Should any symptoms occur, complete an online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

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

- Anyone under mandatory 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 at a distance greater than 2 metres away from others.
- You are not allowed to leave your property to go for a walk through your neighbourhood or park. This includes children in mandatory 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 isolate if symptoms are present?

- People need to isolate for **10** days from the onset of symptoms.
- This is the most up-to-date recommendation based on medical evidence.
- If you are tested and the result is negative for COVID-19, you are not legally required to isolate if you have no known exposure to the virus.

I tested negative for COVID-19, do I need to continue to self-isolate?

- Yes, if you are a returning traveller or a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19.
- No, if you have no known exposure to the virus. However, it is important you stay at home until your symptoms resolve.

What counts as COVID-19 symptoms that require 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 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 isolating?

- People are now legally required to 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 isolate by a health care professional for another reason.
- If you don't meet these criteria, we are not requesting you isolate. If you are at a higher risk of complications from COVID-19, you may wish to stay 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 PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS

What should I do if someone is refusing to follow public health orders (e.g. mandatory isolation)?

- Remind the person that not following public health orders is against the law and puts people at risk. Law enforcement now has 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 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](#). If you cannot submit a complaint online, you can also call **1-833-415-9179** and leave a message when prompted. Please do not submit the same complaint both online and by phone.

- The Alberta government and Alberta Health Services are working with local enforcement agencies to manage complaints.

What if we see businesses or other organizations not following the public health orders?

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

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

- Anyone putting their families, 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, can 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 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 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?

- Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada must go into mandatory isolation for 14 days from their return, plus an additional 10 days from the onset of any symptoms should they occur, whichever is longer.
- Anyone who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms must 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. If you are tested and the result is negative for COVID-19, you are not legally required to isolate.
- Anyone who has been identified by Alberta Health Services as a close contact of a person(s) with COVID-19 must go into mandatory 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.
- Gatherings must be limited to no more than 15 attendees.
 - Albertans have been prohibited from attending some businesses at this time. Check online for the latest details at <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>.
- 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.
- No visitors will be permitted to continuing care facilities (licensed supportive living and long-term care) and residential addiction treatment centres, except visits:
 - When a resident is dying
 - Where, in rare situation, the resident's care needs cannot be without their assistance.

What is considered a routine offence?

- Routine offences typically apply to situations involving individuals violating 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 employees.
- They assist in identifying, planning, implementing and evaluating environmental public health activities across 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, can 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

TRAVEL AND RETURNING TRAVELLERS

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

- If you recently returned from outside Canada, you must go straight home, then:
 - isolate for 14 days, even if you're feeling well
 - monitor for symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, or runny nose.
 - If symptoms occur, you must remain in isolation for an additional 10 days from the onset of symptoms or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer. Complete an online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required
- Isolation orders are not suggestions or guidelines, they are now the law and they must be followed.

I just returned from somewhere in Canada. Am I at risk? What are my next steps?

- If you have recently returned from somewhere in Canada, [check the list of affected flights for updates](#).
 - [isolate](#) for 14 days if you were found to be in an affected seat
 - [monitor for symptoms](#) such as fever, cough, sore throat, or runny nose
 - If symptoms occur, you must remain in isolation for an additional 10 days from the onset of symptoms or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer. Complete an 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 isolate but should monitor for symptoms for 14 days.
 - If COVID-19 symptoms occur, you must isolate for 10 days or until you're feeling better, whichever is longer. Complete an online self-assessment (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) to determine next steps and whether testing is required.

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

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

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

- They must 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.

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 recommended to wear a mask, if possible.

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.
- If you have travel insurance, read your policy closely and determine if its terms and conditions allow for a cancellation due to an event like the COVID-19 pandemic.
If you don't have travel insurance and booked through your credit card, contact your credit card company to see if you can cancel it that way.

What if an airline or insurance provider has a cancellation policy but is refusing to honour it?

- Complaints regarding refunds on fares (and airfare only), are 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 refuse to honour that policy/clause, it could represent an unfair practice.
- In that case, you could file a complaint 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 in place at the time the transaction was entered into.

MASKS AND PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Why are we sending PPE to other provinces? Do we have enough for our front-line staff?

- Many jurisdictions are trying to secure additional health equipment to make up for expected shortfalls. Alberta has prepared adequately with medical equipment and medical/surgical supplies located across the province, allowing for a quick and effective provincial response.
- Alberta's health experts are confident in our modelling data and the expected need for PPEs and ventilators in our province. We are currently in a position to help ensure other Canadian health systems are equipped for the challenges ahead.
- Alberta Health Services has entered into agreements with several vendors to purchase more PPE to prepare for ongoing needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

How many ventilators and how much PPE does Alberta currently have? Will we be prepared in an extreme scenario?

- Alberta continues to prepare for all COVID-19 scenarios.
- Our modelling data shows that in an elevated projection, where we would require almost 400 additional ventilators at the peak of the virus, we will have the equipment we need. Alberta's health experts are confident in our modelling data and our expected need for PPEs and ventilators. We expect to have sufficient supply by the end of the month.
- We have contracts in place to purchase 38 million N95 masks, 50 million procedural masks, 20 million surgical gowns and 1 million face shields.

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

- Alberta has been preparing for months and has an adequate supply of medical equipment available.
- Alberta has equipment and medical/surgical supplies 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 ensure our existing supplies are shared with those who need them, while also being used as effectively as possible.

Are all family physicians getting PPE?

- 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 family doctors have access to personal protective equipment in a time when they are having difficulty ordering these supplies from their usual providers.
- AHS 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 of PPE is needed.

How do we obtain personal protective equipment from the government?

- Requests for personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer can be made to pessecc-logistics@gov.ab.ca or go directly to the web form: <https://www.alberta.ca/ppe-request>
Medical experts will triage and assess the requests and determine actual need based on medical guidelines.
 - The regular channel for requests during an emergency should be followed, which is typically made by the local authority's Emergency Social Services Director, or its Director of Emergency Management.
 - If you are a member of the NGO network, please follow your current process for identifying needs and services you have available to assist.
 - Municipalities and others receiving the PPE are asked to keep good records of the equipment provided to them.

Do you have priorities for distribution?

- The bulk of PPE supplies requested through POC will be in the communities that have placed an order prior the next five to seven days.
 - Healthcare workers are our priority and we are ensuring they get the PPE needed so they can continue to do their good work.
 - Local authorities or employers of people that support vulnerable populations, child-care operators, emergency workers and critical infrastructure operators who placed orders at the Provincial Operations Centre (POC) through the Provincial Emergency Social Services (PESS) are now receiving PPE.

I didn't get the amounts I asked for, are there shortages?

- 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.
- This equipment includes hand sanitizer, wipes, disinfectants, masks, gloves and safety eyewear.
- Medical experts review requests to ensure what is being asked for aligns with best practices – for example, only healthcare workers **need** N95 masks.

Why are some jurisdictions now telling people to wear masks?

- 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.
- There is evidence that people may transmit the COVID-19 virus before they show symptoms. For that reason, some medical experts (including Canada's Chief Medical Officer of Health) are now saying that wearing a mask can add another layer of protection from the virus.
- It's important to emphasize, though, that medical masks, including surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators (like N95 masks) must be kept for healthcare workers and other providing direct care to COVID-19 patients.

Will I be protected if I wear a non-medical mask?

- There is no proof that wearing a non-medical mask, such as a homemade cloth mask, will protect the person wearing it. However, it may be helpful in protecting others around you.
- Face coverings should only be used in combination with other steps to prevent the spread. Masks are another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces. Wearing a mask may also stop you from touching your nose and mouth.
- If you choose to use a non-medical face mask:
 - you must wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off (in addition to practicing good hand hygiene while wearing it)
 - it should fit well (non-gaping)
 - you should not share it with others
- Face masks can become contaminated on the outside or when touched by your hands. When wearing a mask, take the following precautions to protect yourself:
 - avoid touching your face mask while using it
 - change a cloth mask as soon as it gets damp or soiled
 - put it directly into the washing machine or a bag that can be emptied into the washing machine and then disposed of
 - cloth masks can be laundered with other items using a hot cycle, and then dried thoroughly
 - non-medical masks that cannot be washed should be discarded and replaced as soon as they get damp, soiled or crumpled
 - dispose of masks properly in a lined garbage bin
 - don't leave discarded masks in shopping carts, on the ground, etc.
- The most important steps you can take to prevent the spread of infection are:
 - consistent adherence to good hygiene such as proper hand washing

- following all public health orders
- staying home whenever possible

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 such as acute care, primary care, long-term care, ambulatory clinics and community care, homecare and other locations in the community where health care is provided.
- Alberta Health has [specific guidelines](#) for personal protective equipment for these roles. N95 masks are not recommended for the general public, who will typically not find themselves in these settings.

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 the guidelines and equipment 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](#) in place in Alberta are the most important steps to address both the risk and the concerns.
- These guidelines align 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 known to be transmitted by droplet, which means through contact with nasal and oral secretions from a person with the virus.
- Alberta's personal protective equipment guidelines 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.

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

- Requests for personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer can be made 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, **COVID-19** 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' 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?

- AHS's online assessment tool (<http://ahs.ca/covid>) helps people decide whether they need to call Health Link 811 to be tested for COVID-19. The tool will guide people 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 regularly receives 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 wait times can be frustrating and thank the public for continued patience. Albertans can help the call volumes by:
 - visiting alberta.ca/covid for information if you do not need a health assessment.
 - calling Health Link during non-peak times, if possible, if you need a health assessment.
 - if you are awaiting COVID test results, 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 to wash your 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 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 Alberta government and AHS are using emergency response processes. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency Provincial Operations Centre is at a Level 4 (of 4). This means a mandated coordination by the Government of Alberta during a significant incident. It involves a full activation of POC by all of government and public safety partners.

What will the province do if there are multiple, concurrent disasters?

- Our province is taking steps to prepare for wildfires and other hazards this spring and summer by increasing our emergency response capacity.
- This means that while we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will also be ready to respond to other emergencies as they may arise.
 - Recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health will inform measures that may be required in the event of a community evacuation.
- To increase response capacity and prepare for multiple and concurrent disasters such as wildfires and floods, the Provincial Operations Centre has been reinforced by the creation of a Pandemic Response Planning Team. This team will help coordinate government's medium and long-term response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RESTRICTIONS ON GATHERINGS

What is a gathering?

- A 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 gathering restrictions?

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

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 my place of worship?

- In light of the extraordinary circumstances, restrictions have been issued on gatherings to limit the potential spread of COVID-19, this includes faith-based gatherings.
- No gatherings with more than 15 people are allowed.
- Places of worship are encouraged to offer virtual or live-streamed activities instead of in-person events.
- If gatherings with fewer than 15 people do happen, there must be proper mitigation measures in place.
- More information can be found in the [guidance document for faith-based organizations](#).

What about religious holidays? What should people do to stay safe?

- When commemorating religious holidays, Albertans are reminded to:
 - avoid gatherings outside of their immediate household
 - find ways to connect while being physically separated
 - worship in a way that doesn't put people at risk, including participating in virtual or live-streamed religious celebrations
- More guidelines for faith-based organizations can be found [online](#).

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 and allow 2 metres between people;
 - 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;
 - Cleaning 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 who 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 or older and those 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, Red Deer and Lethbridge, have closed their 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 2 metres/6 feet away from other people.

Why do we need a fire ban?

- In Alberta, we traditionally see the highest wildfire hazard in mid-April through the end of May, the time after the snow has melted but before vegetation has started growing.
- Last year 71 per cent of wildfires were human caused. Introducing a fire ban for this time is expected to reduce the number of human-caused wildfires in Alberta, allowing resources to be focussed where they are most needed.

What does the fire ban mean for me? Can I have a fire in my own backyard? A BBQ?

- Propane, natural gas or powered appliances, wood fires in an enclosed facility or device (eg. Incinerator) are permissible
- Wood campfires on public lands, private land or provincial campgrounds, fire pits or charcoal briquette barbecues and fireworks or exploding targets are not permissible.
- Within the Forest Protection Area, the use of backyard firepits and charcoal barbecues on private land is prohibited during a fire ban. However, propane and natural gas-powered appliances may be used safely. The same restrictions apply to Alberta Parks. For more information on what activities are permitted during a fire ban visit albertafirebans.ca.

I already have a fire permit. Can I continue my planned burning?

- No. All fire permits are suspended or cancelled. If the burning is industry (energy, forestry) or agricultural related, an assessment for any permit will be made by a Forest Officer.

What activities are and aren't permissible during a recreational OHV ban?

- Commercial and agricultural users and Indigenous peoples practising Treaty Rights can continue to use OHVs.
 - However, these users must take extra precautions (e.g. carry firefighting equipment) and are encouraged to limit OHV use as much as possible.

- OHV use on private land is permissible.
- Recreational use of OHVs on public lands is not allowed.

What happens if I break the ban or restriction?

- Starting April 15, anyone found to be non-compliant with the fire ban may receive a violation ticket of \$600 and non-compliant with the OHV restriction, a violation ticket of \$1200.
- Anyone found to be non-compliant may also have to go to court and may receive a fine up to \$100,000.
- Additionally, anyone found to be the cause of a wildfire may also be liable for the costs associated with extinguishing the fire.
- Fines can range from \$180 to \$300 in Alberta Parks; however, a judge can assess a person a fine of up to \$100,000 and/or 12 months imprisonment.

What about international events?

- All 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.
- 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 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 BUSINESSES

What are the restrictions on business? What businesses are affected by the restrictions?

- Restrictions are 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.
- Restaurants cannot offer dine-in service. Take-out and delivery services may 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. They may choose to offer online shopping and curb-side pick-up.
- 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 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 gatherings – nothing over 15 people. But these particular facilities are neither private entertainment facilities or recreation facilities and therefore do not have to close.

Are restaurants that are offering take-out service permitted to leave their washrooms open to the public?

- It is at the discretion of the restaurant whether or not to allow access to their washroom to customers who are picking up food.

- An [interactive map](#) is available on 511Alberta for truck drivers to find open restaurants, restrooms and showers on Alberta highways.

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 and golf ranges, included in the restrictions on recreation facilities?

- The Chief Medical Officer of Health has clarified that golf courses are included among the facilities at which public attendance is prohibited.
- Workers are permitted to do maintenance and preparation of courses as long as public health measures that prevent the risk of transmission of COVID-19 are implemented and followed. Information on preventing the risk of transmission can be found under the resources section at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-support-for-employers.aspx>
- FOR GOLF COURSE OPERATORS: The Alberta government recognizes this will likely have a negative impact on your business. For information on funding and supportive measures available to you, should you need them, visit [alberta.ca/COVID](https://www.alberta.ca/COVID).
- Check online for the latest details on [business, workplaces and facility closures](#).

Can I visit my loved one in long-term care, supportive living, congregate living, hospice care or acute care?

- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, AHS is taking additional steps to ensure those most at risk of contracting the virus are protected.
- No visitors are permitted to long-term care, supportive living, congregate living, hospice care and acute care facilities in Alberta.
- Exceptions will be made for maternity care and children who are patients in acute care/outpatient settings, and for visitors attending to a resident who is dying in a continuing care facility.
- Visitors permitted under these exceptions must be verified and undergo a health screening prior to entering the facility. They are also required to wear a mask during their visit.
- Families and friends of those in these facilities are encouraged think of how they can support and encourage their loved ones through this difficult time without visiting.
- For more information, visit <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17001.aspx>.

Can I take my loved one out of a continuing care facility and bring them home if they have tested negative for COVID-19?

- Decisions to relocate a resident from a facility must be made in conjunction with their care team and physician.
- Families will need to be prepared to provide care for the resident (which may include additional home supports) and be responsible for their care until the facility can safely re-admit them.
- We encourage you to speak with your loved one's care team and physician to make an informed decision.

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.
- Practising 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 maintain and administer 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 isolate for 10 days from the start of their symptoms. Testing is not required to follow this advice.

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 continuing care residents are most at risk of experiencing serious effects from COVID-19, more stringent measures are being taken to protect residents and staff.
- To further protect residents and staff from exposure to COVID-19 through asymptomatic individuals, continuing care workers will now be required to wear masks at all times when providing direct patient care or working in patient care areas.
- Workers in long-term care and supportive living sites are only allowed to work at one site in an effort to reduce the spread between locations.

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 practise 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.

Is Alberta conducting any clinical trials to test the effectiveness of drugs to prevent hospitalization for people at the high risk of developing severe symptoms of COVID-19?

- Yes. The Alberta Hope COVID-19 study will recruit 1,600 Albertans to determine whether a prescribed five-day treatment of hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) can prevent hospitalization for those at highest risk of developing a severe illness.
- HCQ is originally an anti-malarial drug currently used mostly for immunological disorders like rheumatoid arthritis. Laboratory studies suggest it may be helpful against COVID-19.

DENTAL HEALTH

Are you 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.

Pregnancy and nursing

Are people who are pregnant more likely to catch COVID-19 or at risk of more serious health complications?

- For Information on pregnancy, including prenatal classes, delivery and postpartum care, go to www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-prenatal-postnatal.pdf.
- People who are pregnant are currently considered to have the same risk of getting COVID-19 as others.

- There is a lack of evidence suggesting pregnancy could lead to more serious health complications from COVID-19.
- Follow usual preventative practices to avoid getting sick.

What is the risk to babies?

- There is currently no evidence that babies will catch the COVID-19 virus during pregnancy, delivery or through breastmilk.

I feel sick and am pregnant, what should I do?

- If you feel sick, complete the COVID 19 online screening tool.
- Notify your health care provider, so they can make different arrangements for your clinic appointments and prenatal care if needed. If you have been tested, talk to your healthcare provider about your COVID-19 test results.

What happens if I am in isolation?

- If you are in mandatory isolation because of experiencing symptoms or have tested positive, your health care provider will recommend that labour and delivery occur in a hospital.
- Contact your health care provider if there are no open hospitals near you for an different arrangement.
- Your health care provider, support person, and any relevant hospital staff will wear protective equipment during your labour and delivery.

What do I do if I am a sick parent with a new baby?

- Parents with COVID-19 should frequently wash commonly touched surfaces, wash their hands before touching the baby, or wear a mask to limit the risk of spread.
- Your health care provider will show you how to wash your hands and chest and wear a mask to protect your baby.

What are the restrictions on who can be with me during labour and delivery?

- Only one support person is allowed to be with you for your labour and delivery.
- The Alberta Health Services restriction on hospital visitors applies to your support person.
- This means that people who are symptomatic or positive for COVID-19 or who are completing their isolation period will not be permitted to be your support person.

How long do I stay in hospital?

- You and your baby will be discharged as soon as possible from the hospital. A public health nurse or your midwife will be in contact to check on you and discuss any further follow up.

How will I receive postpartum care?

- A public health nurse or your midwife will continue your postpartum care in your community.
- Your physician and your baby's physician will continue to provide care; however, this might look different depending on where you live.

What is happening to prenatal classes and care?

- Notify your health care provider if you are feeling sick, are worried about leaving home for your prenatal care appointments, or have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Prenatal classes are suspended to protect Albertans and prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Contact your community or public health centre to find out more about how classes are affected.
- An online prenatal class option is available - [online Birth and Babies course](#).
- You can also refer to Alberta Health Services' pregnancy and parenting resource HealthyParentsHealthyChildren.ca for information on pregnancy, breastfeeding, and the early years.

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.

DONATIONS OF GOODS/SERVICES

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.
- The Government of Alberta encourages individuals, private companies and non-profit organizations interested in supporting the COVID-19 response to submit their [offers of products or services](#) to the Alberta Bits and Pieces Program online (alberta.ca/COVID19offersprogram).

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

What is the government doing as a result of COVID-19 to support the mental health and addiction recovery of Albertans?

- More than \$53 million in one-time funding is being provided to implement a comprehensive mental health and addiction COVID-19 response plan which includes:
 - expanding mental health support and referral lines including the Alberta Health Services (AHS) Addiction and Mental Health Helplines, 211, Crisis Text Line Alberta and Kids Help Phone to increase capacity and add new supports
 - investing in online resources and platforms where Albertans can communicate with peers who are dealing with the same issues and get support 24/7 from AHS addiction and mental health clinicians when they need it.
 - implementing a new online platform that will provide mental health screening, self-help modules and support from counsellors when it is needed
 - launching a \$25- million grant program for community groups to enhance community mental health and addiction recovery for the public, including Indigenous communities, seniors, families and people experiencing social barriers, who are negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic
 - expanding AHS family violence services
 - increasing addiction and mental health services in primary care networks

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 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.

COMMUNICATING WITH ALBERTANS

What is government doing to ensure all pandemic-related communications released by provincial and health authorities are fully accessible and in plain language?

- All communications, including all COVID-19 information at the alberta.ca/covid19 website, is written in simple, easy to understand language. We want all Albertans to understand the spread of the virus and know how to stay healthy.

How are you communicating with Albertans who are hearing impaired?

- The province contracts a sign-language interpreter at each availability with the Premier and Chief Medical Officer of Health to help communicate to people who are hard of hearing.

What about people who don't speak English?

- Information sheets on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are available in a number of languages, including French, Arabic, Chinese, Hindi and Urdu.

Do you have communication materials for people who have developmental disabilities?

- Community and Social Services is developing an information sheet on COVID for folks with developmental disabilities. Once it's complete it will be available on the alberta.ca/covid19 website.