



NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

It is important to work together to protect our First Nations citizens and all who we serve by providing relevant and up-to-date information as it becomes available and is confirmed to be accurate from official public health sources.

Here are some commonly asked questions regarding protecting you and your family and friends from the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

What is Coronavirus or COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause respiratory illness in people, ranging from mild common colds to severe illnesses. Others cause illness in animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people then spread from person to person through close contact.

Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the virus that have not been previously identified in humans.

The official name for the virus responsible for the current outbreak is COVID-19, previously known as "2019 novel coronavirus".

How is COVID-19 spread?

At this time, it appears COVID-19 is transmitted through person-to-person spread by:

- larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze
- touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth

Studies suggest that the virus generally only lasts a few hours on a surface, though it may be possible for it to last several days under ideal conditions.

While there is person-to-person spread, current evidence indicates it is not airborne through long distances or times. There is no evidence that it's capable of being transmitted by imported goods.

What are the symptoms to look for?

Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other respiratory illnesses. They can range from mild to severe, but the majority of cases have reported mild symptoms.

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

Common signs of infection include:

- fever;
- cough;
- shortness of breath;
- difficulty breathing;
- extreme tiredness

Most people (about 80%) recover from this disease without needing special treatment.

However, it can cause serious illness. Those who are older, and those with other medical problems are more likely to develop serious illness, which can include:

- difficulty breathing;
- pneumonia

There is a risk of death in severe cases.

While we are still learning about how COVID-19 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.



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How can I prevent being infected?

Common public health measures you can take to reduce the risk of respiratory illnesses, including the flu and coronavirus from spreading quickly include:

- wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- cough and sneeze into your sleeve and not your hands;
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands;
- avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing, and;
- stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill



Cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands

OR



Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue and put your used tissue in the waste basket

Should I be wearing a mask?

Masks can be very 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 respiratory symptoms to wear a mask and wash their hands when visiting an emergency department or clinic.

- If you are sick, wearing a mask helps prevent passing the illness on to other people.
- **If you are healthy, medical masks are not recommended as they don't provide full protection and can create a false sense of security.**

What should I do if I think I have COVID-19?

If your symptoms include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing and have travelled outside Canada or have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19, **DO NOT go to the doctor's office, a healthcare facility, or a lab.** Follow the assessment guide below.

Alberta Health Services has developed a simple online assessment tool to help you decide whether you need to call **Health Link at 811** to be tested for COVID-19. It'll guide you to answer questions about your symptoms & take you through steps to help determine whether you need testing. <http://ahs.ca/covid>

The tool will direct you to call **Health Link 811** if COVID-19 testing is required. It will also provide reassurance to those who don't require further testing and will reduce call volumes to **Health Link at 811** for those whose symptoms are not serious at this time.

Health Link 811 will assess you over the phone and if needed AHS will schedule an appointment in your home for testing while you are in self-isolation or if more urgent medical attention is necessary, AHS will make needed arrangements for the safety of yourself and medical staff. **If you need immediate medical attention, call 911 and inform them that you may have COVID-19.**

What is the treatment for COVID-19?

For now, there is no specific vaccine for COVID-19.

Researchers in many different countries are now working to develop a vaccine. Supportive care has been used in the treatment of patients with COVID-19.

Consult <http://ahs.ca/covid> or your health care provider if you're concerned about your health, or feeling ill and recently travelled to an affected area.