

Please note that dates have been highlighted in red as the situation is constantly changing and the information requires updating.

About 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, and more rarely, these can 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.

Cases in Alberta:

As of **Wednesday, March 11, 2020**, Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services (AHS) have confirmed nineteen cases of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Alberta.¹

Spread

COVID-19 is believed to be spread mainly by coughing, sneezing or direct contact with someone who is sick with COVID-19 or with surfaces they have recently touched.

Risk

The current risk for people in Alberta is still assessed as low at this time, however, we anticipate this risk may increase in the coming weeks. A higher risk applies to people who develop a fever and/or cough or shortness of breath AND meets any of the criteria below.

In the 14 days before illness onset, they:

Travelled to the following areas: mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Iran, South Korea, Japan, or Italy;

OR

Had close contact² with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19;

OR

Had close contact¹ with a person with acute respiratory illness who was in mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Iran, South Korea, Japan or Italy within 14 days prior to illness onset;

OR

Had laboratory exposure to biological material (e.g. primary clinical specimens, virus culture isolates) known to contain COVID-19 virus.

Anyone meeting these criteria should avoid contact with others and call Health Link 811 for advice.

¹ The number stated is accurate at the time of writing.

² A **close contact** is defined as a person who provided care for the individual, including healthcare workers, family members or other caregivers, or who had other similar close physical contact with the person without consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment OR who lived with or otherwise had close prolonged contact (within 2 metres) with the person while they were infectious OR had direct contact with infectious bodily fluids of the person (e.g. was coughed or sneezed on) while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.

Contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19

If you were in contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days, regardless of which country you were in, we recommend that you self-isolate and limit your contact with others for 14 days and call Health Link 811 for additional advice.

Returning from Iran or Hubei Province in China, call Health Link 811 for specific instructions.

Returning from other parts of mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Japan and Italy

If you are returning from any of these areas:

- Monitor yourself daily for symptoms like fever, cough or shortness of breath for 14 days after your last visit
- At the first sign of symptoms, immediately self-isolate and call Health Link 811
- If, while in these areas, you or your family members were in contact with someone who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or you were in a health care facility, call Health Link 811

Prevention

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

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

Symptoms

Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other respiratory illnesses. They can range from mild to severe and include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

The majority of cases have reported mild symptoms. Older adults and people with medical conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and lung disease are more likely to become seriously ill.

Older patients, who tend to have chronic medical conditions, may be at higher risk for severe illnesses. Also, family members who live with someone with chronic illnesses may not be in the high risk category but could be a source of the transmission of illnesses. They are also essential in taking care of and helping someone who falls ill. They need to take precautions.