

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Frequently Asked Questions – Public

Jan. 11, 2021

### What's happening in Alberta?

Alberta continues to see cases of COVID-19. For the most current information impacting all Albertans including information on testing, case count, visitor restrictions, posters and more, please visit [www.alberta.ca/covid19](http://www.alberta.ca/covid19).

Healthcare workers are encouraged to visit [www.ahs.ca/covid](http://www.ahs.ca/covid).

Issued by the AHS Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC).

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## General Information about COVID-19

### 1. **UPDATED** What is novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses cause respiratory illness in humans, ranging from mild common colds to severe pneumonias. Others cause illness in animals only. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and more rarely, these can spread from person-to-person through close contact.
- Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the virus that have not been previously identified in humans.
- COVID-19 is the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, a new virus that was first recognized in December 2019.
- COVID-19 continues to spread throughout the province, posing a serious risk to public health and the healthcare system. In [this video](#), Dr. Neil Collins talks about the devastating effects of the pandemic and urges Albertans to adhere to public health measures.

### 2. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- The most common [symptoms of COVID-19](#) include:
  - Fever
  - A new cough or a chronic cough that is worsening
  - New or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
  - Sore throat
  - Runny nose
- Additional Symptoms of COVID-19 can include:
  - Stuffy nose
  - Painful swallowing
  - Headache

- Chills
- Muscle or joint aches
- Feeling unwell in general, or new fatigue or severe exhaustion
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or unexplained loss of appetite)
- Loss of sense of smell or taste
- Conjunctivitis, commonly known as pink eye
- 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
  - Death in severe cases.
- While we are still learning about COVID-19, serious illness appears to develop more often in people who are older or have pre-existing conditions, such as:
  - High blood pressure
  - Heart and/or lung disease
  - Cancer
  - Diabetes

### 3. How is COVID-19 spread from person-to-person?

- COVID-19 is transmitted through tiny droplets of liquid produced by people who have the virus, and then spread from person-to-person by:
  - coughing, sneezing, talking, laughing, and singing
  - touching objects or surfaces the virus has landed on and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth (bath towels, kitchen utensils, door knobs, etc.)
- People who have COVID-19 can spread it to others before they start to feel sick.
- COVID-19 is not widely spread by being airborne, which means it doesn't stay in the air long and won't go very far. But if you are too close to someone with COVID-19 you can get sick by breathing in air that contains droplets with the virus.
  - Airborne transmission is not the dominant or common mode of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 ([Public Health Ontario Review](#)). Research on the extent and scale of airborne transmission mode is ongoing.
- We think the virus generally only survives for a few hours on a surface or object, but it may be possible for it to survive several days under some conditions.

### 4. Who is most at risk for becoming very sick with COVID-19?

- Although most people who develop COVID-19 will experience mild illness, some individuals are more likely to become seriously ill. Older adults and people with medical conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and lung disease appear to be at higher risk of becoming very sick.

### 5. Can herd immunity be effective to reduce the spread of COVID-19?

- Dr. Deena Hinshaw, the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health, wrote a [detailed response](#) outlining the human toll and efficacy of pursuing a 'herd immunity' strategy. Dr. Hinshaw explains why herd immunity will lead to increased deaths and increased hospitalization, and points out it's still unclear if COVID-19 infection confers long-lasting protection against future infections. "Herd immunity by natural infection is not a wise, or possibly even an achievable, goal to pursue," she concludes.

### 6. UPDATED How is COVID-19 treated?

- Most people with mild illness will recover on their own. Although there are no specific medications or proven treatments for COVID-19 at this time, supportive care is being used to treat people with COVID-19 and some medications are being tested to see if they help severely ill patients.

## 7. Are there vaccines to prevent COVID-19?

- Review this section for more information about a [COVID-19 vaccine](#) in Alberta.

## 8. What is the difference between COVID-19 and influenza?

- In some ways, COVID-19 is similar to influenza (also known as the flu):
  - Both COVID-19 and the flu cause respiratory disease.
  - Both are spread the same way, via small droplets from the nose and mouth.
  - Neither one is spread through the air over long distances and times, unlike a disease like the measles.
- However, there are some key differences between COVID-19 and the flu:
  - The flu and COVID-19 are different viruses.
  - Both have similar symptoms, and it can be difficult to tell the [difference between influenza and COVID-19 symptoms](#).
  - COVID-19 seems to spread more easily than influenza.
  - We currently have no specific vaccine or treatment for COVID-19.
  - COVID-19 causes severe disease in a higher percentage of cases than seasonal influenza. Estimates of mortality in COVID-19 cases depend on many things, but on average they range from about 1-2 deaths per 100 people infected. By comparison, seasonal influenza is deadly in about 1 in every 1000 who are infected.
  - Because COVID-19 can cause such a serious illness, it is critical to keep it from spreading by having people with a cough or fever stay home and away from others.

## 9. How can I protect myself and my family from COVID-19?

- Make sure you practice proper [physical distancing](#). Wear a mask in public when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres at all times. [Masks](#) should be used in addition to other public health measures to limit spread.
  - On December 8, the Government of Alberta made masking mandatory for all indoor public spaces, workplaces and places of worship.
  - All Albertans should follow public health measures as determined by the Government of Alberta. Review [the website](#) for more information.
- Adhere to the same practices we recommend for protecting against all respiratory illnesses:
  - [Wash your hands](#) using an alcohol-based rub or soap and warm water for at least twenty seconds.
  - 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.
  - [Get immunized against influenza](#)
- If you do get sick, you should stay home and complete the COVID-19 [online assessment tool](#) to see if you should be tested.
- The webpage [ahs.ca/ShrinkYourBubble](#) outlines steps Albertans can take to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## 10. What are your recommendations for people who are immune compromised, have asthma or at high risk of severe illness for other medical reasons?

- Stay home. Now is the time to stay home and avoid social and other outings that are not essential.
- If you must leave your home, make sure you practice proper [physical distancing](#). Wear a mask in public when it is difficult to maintain physical distancing of 2 metres at all times. [Masks](#) should be used in addition to other public health measures to limit spread.
- Follow the same practices recommended for protection against all respiratory illnesses:
  - [Wash your hands](#) using an alcohol-based rub or soap and warm water for at least twenty seconds.

- 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.
- When sick, [cover your cough and sneezes with your arm](#), and then wash your hands.
- Call 911 if you become seriously ill and need immediate medical attention.

### 11. When should I go to the hospital?

- Call 911 if you are seriously ill and need immediate medical attention.
- If you do not need urgent medical attention, take the [online self-assessment tool](#), call your doctor or call Health Link at 811 for virtual health assessment and referral.

### 12. Where can I find information about outbreaks or other statistics about cases of COVID-19 in our province?

- AHS has developed a webpage dedicated to reporting the daily COVID-19 outbreak numbers in acute care settings across the province. It will be updated each weekday afternoon, and will include confirmed COVID-19 cases in patients and healthcare workers from active outbreaks. You can check out [Acute Care Outbreaks webpage](#).
- You can find more information, statistics and characteristics on the [Alberta Health website](#).

## COVID-19 Testing in Alberta

### 13. I'm feeling ill and think I may have COVID-19. What should I do?

- Effective Oct. 20, COVID-19 testing is now only offered to Albertans in the groups listed below.
  - Albertans with symptoms of COVID-19
  - Albertans who are close contacts of a confirmed case, whether symptomatic or not
  - Albertans who are linked to a known outbreak, whether symptomatic or not
  - All healthcare workers who are symptomatic, are a close contact of a COVID-19 case or are linked to an outbreak will still receive testing.
  - Refer to [this question](#) to understand the new testing and isolation requirements for children and youth under the age of 18.
- Testing will be by appointment, which can be booked online by visiting [www.ahs.ca/covid](http://www.ahs.ca/covid). If using the Internet is not an option, call [811](#) to book an appointment.
- Please note that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 is allowed to leave home to come for testing, [following the guidance outlined in this Order](#).
- Review [this question](#) to learn when your isolation period would be over.

#### **Steps to take if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19**

- [Isolate](#)
- Do not attend work, school, social events, or any other public gatherings.
- Don't share personal items like dishes, utensils, or towels.
- [Wash your hands often](#).
- Avoid close contact with other people, especially those with chronic conditions, a compromised immune system, or seniors (over 65 years of age).
- Please do not visit a hospital, physician's office, lab or healthcare facility without consulting your doctor or Health Link (811) first.
  - For a medical emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department. Inform them that you may have COVID-19.
- Stay home for a minimum of 10 days with any cold or flu symptoms until feeling well.
- If symptoms continue past 10 days, isolation should as well.
- If you have life-threatening symptoms, go to an emergency department or call 911.

- Travellers must [quarantine](#) for 14 days upon return, even when feeling fine. If symptoms are experienced during this period of quarantine, you must isolate for an additional 10 days following the onset of symptoms, no matter how long you've already been in quarantine. Travellers participating in the International Border Pilot project must follow those instructions.
- Please visit [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid) for the complete guidelines on [isolation and quarantine](#).
- Albertans can now read about [COVID-19 self-care instructions](#) and [how to manage symptoms of COVID-19 at home](#) on MyHealth.Alberta.ca.

### 14. Who is considered priority testing for COVID-19?

- Effective Oct. 20, COVID-19 testing is now only offered to Albertans in the groups listed below.
  - Albertans with symptoms of COVID-19
  - Albertans who are close contacts of a confirmed case, whether symptomatic or not
  - Albertans who are linked to a known outbreak, whether symptomatic or not
  - All healthcare workers who are symptomatic, are a close contact of a COVID-19 case or are linked to an outbreak will still receive testing.
  - Refer to [this question](#) to understand the new testing and isolation requirements for children and youth under the age of 18.

### 15. Has testing for children and youth under the age of 18 changed? Why did it change?

- Alberta Health announced a new COVID-19 daily checklist for children and youth under the age of 18 (as well as individuals 18 years of age and over attending high school), which will take effect Nov. 2.
- This will directly affect testing and isolation requirements for Albertans under 18 attending classes, daycare or recreational activities, as well as individuals 18 years and over attending high school.
  - Albertans should use the [online assessment tool](#) to self-assess for isolation and testing requirements.
- The changes reflect current evidence on the symptoms associated with COVID-19 in children and youth, and will assist with assessing students who may be symptomatic, or who may have been exposed to someone who is ill or has confirmed COVID-19.
- Data shows some single symptoms (such as a runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea, etc.) are commonly associated with many other illnesses in children and are not a strong indicator of COVID-19 in youth, especially if they resolve quickly.
  - For a child with no known exposures to COVID-19 or international travel in the past 14 days, and has any of the following symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath or loss of sense of smell or taste:
    - The child is to isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms.
    - Testing is recommended.
    - If the child has a negative test result and is feeling better, normal activities can resume even before the 10-day isolation is complete.
  - If a child has ONE of: chills; sore throat or painful swallowing; runny nose or congestion; feeling unwell or fatigue; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; unexplained loss of appetite; muscle or joint aches; headache; conjunctivitis:
    - The child should stay home and monitor for 24 hours.
    - If their symptom is improving after 24 hours, they can return to school/activities when they feel well enough to go. Testing is not necessary.
    - If the symptom worsens after 24 hours (or if additional symptoms emerge), testing is recommended but not required. The child can return to activities and school when:
      - Their symptoms have resolved AND it's been at least 24 hours since their symptoms started.

- If the child has any TWO of: chills; sore throat or painful swallowing; runny nose or congestion; feeling unwell or fatigue; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; unexplained loss of appetite; muscle or joint aches; headache; conjunctivitis:
  - The child should stay home.
  - Testing is recommended but not required.
    - The child can attend school/daycare and other public places when their symptoms have resolved AND it's been 24 hours or more since their symptoms started.
- Children with any symptoms should **not** visit a congregate living or acute care facility for 10 days from when symptom(s) started or until they go away (whichever is longer), unless they receive a negative COVID-19 test result and are feeling better.
- A child who is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case will still need to be home for 14 days.

### 16. Why did the criteria for COVID-19 testing change?

- COVID-19 testing criteria has changed in an effort to reduce wait times and to speed up access to results for those at greatest risk of illness.
- As this new testing approach will support more rapid turnaround of test results, we anticipate that healthcare workers will be better supported in effectively managing symptoms or potential exposures.
- The spread of COVID-19 will continue to be monitored, and our testing strategy will be adapted as needed.

### 17. I've taken the online assessment and determined that I need to be tested. Is there a way to book an appointment online to be tested for COVID-19?

- Testing will be by appointment, which can be easily booked online by visiting [www.ahs.ca/covid](http://www.ahs.ca/covid). If using the Internet is not an option, [811](tel:811) can book an appointment online.
- Once a symptomatic Albertan completes the online self-assessment, they will be presented with an option to book an appointment online with the closest location, available appointment dates and times for testing.
- Upon selecting their chosen date and time, they will receive a booking confirmation and at the same time, the booking will show up in the schedule at the testing assessment centre.
- Effective Nov. 30, 2020, Albertans who are connected to an outbreak will be given an outbreak (EI) number and then directed to book an appointment for a COVID-19 test through the AHS online assessment tool. The linkage through an EI number will reduce the workload of CDC and Health Link and will allow public health to monitor the outbreaks more efficiently.

### 18. **UPDATED** Is there a rapid test to confirm COVID-19 in patients?

- Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) successfully piloted rapid point-of-care testing for COVID-19 in clinical settings in December 2020. Clinical pilots took place at assessment centres, hospitals, continuing care facilities and homeless shelters.
- Broader implementation of rapid testing that is now underway in all AHS zones.
- By the end of January 2021, rapid point-of-care testing is expected to be in place at 48 assessment centres, 27 hospital labs and four homeless shelters in Calgary and Edmonton.
- Rapid point-of-care testing is most effective when used on patients who are within the first week of showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- This type of testing helps to quickly identify and notify positive, speeds up the appropriate care and isolation of patients and reduces the spread of the virus in our communities. It also reduces the need for patient samples to be transported to centralized public laboratories for processing.

19. I was tested for COVID-19. While waiting for test results, when am I required to isolate or quarantine and when am I not?

- The COVID-19 test detects if the virus is in your nose or throat. Testing will tell you whether you have COVID-19 at the time of your test, even if you are not showing symptoms. It is important that you understand what to do while you await your tests results, and what it means if your COVID-19 test is positive or negative:
- You are **legally required** to isolate or quarantine if:
  - you test positive for COVID-19;
  - you have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat (for adults) or cough, fever, shortness of breath ([for children](#)) that is **not related** to a pre-existing illness or health condition and you have not been tested or you are awaiting test results;
  - you are a close contact of someone known to have COVID-19; OR
  - you have returned from travel outside Canada within the last 14 days.
    - Review [this question](#) to learn when your quarantine or isolation period would be over.

If you are a close contact of a case or returned from travel outside of Canada in the last 14 days, you must quarantine for the full 14 days, even if you have a negative test result. \*Please refer to [this question](#) to understand quarantine policies for those who participated in the travel pilot program.

- You do **not have to isolate** if any of the following apply, AND you are not a close contact of a case or returned from travel outside of Canada in the last 14 days:
  - you have symptoms of illness that **are related** to a pre-existing illness or health condition
  - you have tested negative for COVID-19
  - you have tested negative for COVID-19 and have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat that is related to a pre-existing illness or health condition. Note: we recommend that you stay home when sick with any illness, until symptoms resolve; however, if your COVID test is negative, this is not legally required.
- Visit [ahs.ca/isolation](https://ahs.ca/isolation) for more information on isolation and quarantine requirements, testing options, symptoms and supports available. For Government of Alberta regulations, see [Alberta Health Isolation and Quarantine Requirements](#).

20. I was tested; can I receive my results by text message or autodialer?

- Albertans can now receive their COVID-19 test results — either positive or negative — through a text message or an automated phone call. People who don't choose the text or automated call methods will receive their results by a phone call from an AHS team member.
- Albertans who opt for a text message are advised results are texted any time of the day, seven days a week. Automated phone calls are made between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., seven days a week.
- Parents and guardians will also be able to consent to receive automated test results for dependents (aged 17 years and younger). Each test result is delivered by a dedicated call or text. This could mean multiple calls or texts are delivered to a single number provided for a family.
- As announced on [November 5](#), AHS will also continue to directly contact all close contacts of cases in healthcare workers, minors (parents will be notified if their child has been exposed in a school setting), and individuals who live or work within congregate or communal facilities, through either phone or email.
- Going forward, all Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 will receive a text message to notify them when their isolation period has ended. AHS will no longer make phone calls releasing cases from isolation.
- School-related contacts will continue to receive email notification from AHS, and workplaces and [organizers of events](#) of 10 or more attendees will also still be asked to notify the appropriate staff and all attendees, respectively.

- Refer to [this question](#) to understand the notification process for close contacts of positive cases.

## 21. Is there any other ways I access my test results?

- On Aug. 27, 2020, Alberta Health announced Albertans age 14 and up can now access the [MyHealth Records](#) (MHR) tool immediately after signing up online, without waiting for mailed verification.
- Albertans need to [sign up for a MyAlberta Digital ID](#) to use this service.
- Albertans who sign-up for MyHealth Records are able to see their COVID test results – as well as other lab work and immunization records - as soon as they are ready.
  - Parents can now access their children's COVID-19 test results in addition to their own results.
    - Parents, you will need to provide your child's personal health number and test date to access your child COVID-19 test results (within the last 30 days). These results will also be available as a printable pdf.

## 22. I am required to travel and need a copy of my test results to share with the airline and the country I will be visiting. How can I access a printed copy of my results?

- Albertans can access a new fee-for-service COVID travel testing service, offered by Dynalife Medical Labs.
- For a fee of \$150, travelers can be tested by appointment only and receive results that are valid within 72 hours of the arrival time at their destination. Tests must be booked at least 24 hours before departure.
- To access this testing, Albertans should visit [ahs.ca/covid](https://ahs.ca/covid), and complete the self-assessment, indicating they require testing for their travel plans.
- Albertans requiring COVID testing for travel purposes will then be redirected to DynaLife's travel testing booking system. Clients will be able to book an appointment at the nearest available travel test collection site.
  - Initial travel test collection sites will be located in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray.
  - Clients may have to travel outside their community to be tested, depending on testing centre availability and their travel itinerary timing.

## 23. I just received a positive COVID-19 test result. What do I do?

- If you have/had [symptoms](#) and your test result for COVID-19 is positive, you are **legally** required to [isolate](#) for **10 days** from when your symptoms started and until symptoms are gone (whichever is longer).
- If you have not had any symptoms, but your test is positive, you are **legally** required to [isolate](#) for 10 days from the date you were tested; this date will change if you develop symptoms during this 10 day period.
  - Review [this question](#) to learn when your isolation period would be over.
- Albertans who receive a positive COVID-19 result will now be asked to immediately visit [ahs.ca/closecontacts](https://ahs.ca/closecontacts) and click on the COVID-19 Close Contact Tool and enter information, including phone numbers of known close contacts.
  - [Isolation](#) helps prevent the spread of COVID-19 by lowering the chance the virus could spread to others.
  - You **must** stay at home – don't leave your home or attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings, unless you need medical assistance:
    - Call 911 if you are seriously ill and need immediate medical attention. Inform them that you have COVID-19.
    - If you do not need urgent medical attention, you can call your primary health care provider or 811 for a virtual health assessment.
- Avoid close contact with other people, including household members, and especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems.
- Wash your hands often and thoroughly, cover your cough and sneezes, avoid sharing household items and clean and disinfect frequently touched and shared surfaces.
- Visit [ahs.ca/isolation](https://ahs.ca/isolation) for more information on isolation requirements, testing options, symptoms and supports available.



## 24. I tested positive for COVID-19. How will AHS identify and notify close contacts?

- [AHS will directly notify](#) through phone or email close contacts of cases of COVID-19 confirmed in three priority groups only:
  - health care workers,
  - minors (parents will be notified if their child has been exposed in a school setting); and,
  - Individuals who live or work within congregate or communal facilities.
- Albertans who receive a positive COVID-19 result will now be asked to immediately visit [ahs.ca/closecontacts](https://ahs.ca/closecontacts) and click on the COVID-19 Close Contact Tool and enter information, including phone numbers of known close contacts.
  - Once submitted, our contact tracing team will review all close contacts with the positive case, and an automated text message notification, including additional guidance and instructions, will be delivered to all close contacts whose phone numbers are provided.
  - Refer to this [question for supports](#) on how to notify close contacts via email after a positive test.
- [Event organizers](#) will also still be directed to notify event attendees of an exposure, and workplaces will be informed by AHS of a case, and directed to send out the notification to employees.
- Going forward, all Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 will receive a text message to notify them when their isolation period has ended. AHS will no longer make phone calls releasing cases from isolation.
- Review the [contact tracing page](#) for other details.
  - Refer to this [question for supports](#) on how to notify close contacts after a positive test.

## 25. What defines a close contact?

- A close contact is anyone who, during the [infectious period](#):
  - lived with or was within two metres of a person who has COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more of cumulative contact, i.e. multiple interactions for a total of 15 minutes or more, even if a mask was worn during that contact, or
  - has had direct contact with bodily fluids of a person who has COVID-19 (e.g., was coughed or sneezed on), or
  - provided direct care for a person who has COVID-19, or
  - has physical contact with a person who has COVID-19, such as handshake, hugging, kissing, or sexual activity, or
  - shares items with a person who has COVID-19 such as drinks, personal hygiene items, cigarettes, vapes, lipstick, eating utensils, etc.
- For sports that involve close, sustained or intermittent and repeated contact, all members of the teams playing each other are considered close contacts when there is a case on a team.
- Anyone who falls into any of the above categories is considered a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19. Wearing a non-medical mask is not sufficient to exempt you from being considered a close contact
- Consistent and appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) by regulated health care professionals must be assessed to determine if the individual had adequate protection from a potential COVID-19 exposure.

## 26. What does infectious period mean?

- The time that a person can spread COVID-19 to others is called the infectious period.
  - For a person with COVID-19 who has symptoms, the infectious period is 48 hours before the start of symptoms until 10 days after the start of their symptoms. For some people this may be longer. See [Isolation and Quarantine](#) for more information.
  - For a person with COVID-19 who had no symptoms when they were tested, the infectious period is 48 hours before they had their test done, to 10 days after the date of their test (if they remain symptom free). If the person develops symptoms after having their test, they are infectious to others for the duration of their symptoms. For most people, this is until 10 days after the start of their symptoms. See [Isolation and Quarantine](#) for more information.

27. Why did contact tracing procedures change?

- We continue to see an increasing number of positive cases of COVID-19 confirmed in Alberta. That volume is outpacing our contact tracing team, and we are now facing backlogs that demand a change in our current approach.
- This pilot approach will improve the efficiency of all contact tracing, and allow the contact tracing team to focus on populations at greatest risk of illness and further spread. AHS also continues to hire more staff and develop additional, innovative approaches to augment the contact tracing team.

28. I tested positive for COVID-19 and must notify close contacts. Where can I find supports on what to say or how to share this information.

- AHS has developed a new webpage, [ahs.ca/closecontacts](https://ahs.ca/closecontacts), where Albertans can click on the COVID-19 Close Contact Tool and enter information, including phone numbers of known close contacts. They can also find supports including email templates and scripts to use when notifying their own close contacts, as well as guidelines to help them identify their own close contacts.
- Close contacts of a positive case are asked to quarantine and be tested for COVID-19.

29. I tested positive for COVID-19. When will I receive a call from contact tracing to start the case investigation to determine the point of exposure?

- Effective November 24, AHS will no longer call Albertans to conduct case investigation and contact tracing if 10 days have passed since receiving their positive COVID-19 test result.
- Instead, they will receive a text message that will notify them to not expect a call AND provide them with guidance on if and when their isolation period has ended.
- Going forward, all Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 will receive a text message to notify them when their isolation period has ended. AHS will no longer make phone calls releasing cases from isolation.

30. I tested positive for COVID-19. When is my isolation over?

- Isolating and quarantining help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reducing the number of people you could infect if you're sick. Both require staying home and avoiding situations where the virus could spread.
- Go to <https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx> for more information from the Government of Alberta on isolation requirements.
- Isolation generally ends 10 days after your symptom onset IF you have not had a fever for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, AND your other symptoms have improved. If symptoms such as fever have continued, the isolation period should continue until 24 hours after fever has ended (without the use of fever-reducing medications). Some symptoms such as fatigue and cough may last longer than 10 days, but do not require a longer isolation.
- If you never develop symptoms, your isolation period ends 10 days after the date when your first positive COVID-19 swab was taken.
- All Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 will receive a text message to notify them when their isolation period has ended. AHS will no longer make phone calls releasing cases from isolation.
- Visit [ahs.ca/isolation](https://ahs.ca/isolation) for more information on isolation requirements, testing options, symptoms and supports available.

31. If I am a confirmed close contact but have tested negative and have no symptoms, do I need to quarantine?

- Yes, you must continue to quarantine until 14 days after the last exposure to the case. The requirement for quarantine for close contacts or returned travellers supersedes any testing results (except if participating in the International Border Pilot Project where there is a specific regimen of testing and shortened quarantine).

- Check [ahs.ca/isolation](https://ahs.ca/isolation) or more information on quarantine requirements.

### 32. I just received a negative COVID-19 test result. What do I do?

- If your test is negative but you have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 or you have returned from travel outside of Canada you must still [quarantine](#) for the full 14 days from your last contact with the person who is positive, or from the day you returned to Canada (unless participating in the International Border Pilot Project). \*Please refer to [this question](#) to understand quarantine policies for those who participated in the travel pilot program.
- You'll need to continue to follow all public health measures, such as [physical distancing](#) and hand hygiene, even if your test is negative.
- If you develop new [symptoms](#), [isolate](#) and take the COVID-19 [self-assessment online](#), or call Health Link at 811 for additional advice.

### 33. **UPDATED** How can I be tested for COVID-19 upon returning from travel abroad?

- A [pilot project](#) between the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada launched Nov. 2, 2020, providing an option for travellers entering Canada through Alberta to be tested for COVID-19.
- Eligible participants will be allowed to quarantine for less time if they test negative for COVID-19 and commit to following specific public health and testing measures.

### 34. What does the testing of asymptomatic Albertans reveal?

- Testing can only determine whether a person has COVID-19 at the time testing, even if they are asymptomatic.
- Tests cannot reliably determine whether someone has previously had COVID-19. They also cannot assess immunity to COVID-19.
- Please be aware that anyone who was asymptomatic when tested and who tests positive for COVID-19 is legally required to isolate for 10 days after the swab was taken. Close contacts of people with positive test results will also have to isolate.

## **COVID-19 APP**

### 35. Is there an app that can let me know if I've been exposed to COVID-19?

- The [ABTraceTogether](#) app, created by the Government of Alberta, will enhance the current manual contact tracing process and help Albertans protect themselves and their loved ones. It that can help identify if you've been exposed to, or if you've exposed others, to COVID-19.
- The app uses your phone's Bluetooth to keep an anonymous log of other app users you've been in close contact with.
- The app is now available to download for free from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). More information about the app is available from the Government of Alberta, [here](#).

## **Caring For Yourself or Loved Ones with COVID-19**

### 36. My loved one who I live with, has or is being tested for COVID-19. How can I take care of them and not get sick myself?

- If at all possible, try to ensure that the ill person has a designated bedroom and bathroom.
- Maintain physical distance from the ill individual, as much as possible.
- Visitors should not come to the home.
- Do not allow the ill person to prepare meals for others, and ensure that the ill person uses separate preparation area or at least prepares meals at a different time, washing all surfaces after.

- Avoid sharing household items like dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels and pillows.
- Wash your hands frequently, with soap and warm water.
- Frequently sanitize all surfaces, particular hand rails, door knobs, sink taps, toilets, and other items of frequent touching.
- Advise loved one to cover their coughs and sneezes with their arm, not their hand, and to practice good respiratory etiquette at all times.
- Monitor yourself for [symptoms](#) and call Health Link at 811 or call your doctor for assessment and advice if you have symptoms yourself.

### 37. What does isolation and quarantine mean?

- Isolation and quarantine help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reducing contact with others. Both require staying home and avoiding situations where the virus could spread and infect other people. This means all situations where you may come in contact with others, such as social gatherings, work, school, child care, athletic events, university, faith-based gatherings, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls, and all public gatherings.
  - You should, (where possible) not use public transportation including buses, taxis, or ride sharing.
  - As much as possible, you should limit contact with people.
  - You should avoid having visitors to your home, but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food on the doorstep.
  - You can also use delivery services for errands such as grocery shopping.
  - Avoid sharing household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, pillows, or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water, place in the dishwasher for cleaning, or wash in the washing machine.
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water and regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched and shared surfaces such as doorknobs and counters.
  - If you need to leave your home for essential medical care or testing wear a mask while you are out.
  - During this time, it is important that you monitor your health for symptoms like fever or cough.
  - If you [develop symptoms](#), you can complete the [online assessment tool](#) for additional advice or call Health Link at 811.
- Please visit [ahs.ca/isolation](https://ahs.ca/isolation) for more information on isolation and quarantine.
- Review [this question](#) to learn when your isolation period would be over.

### 38. If a person tested positive for COVID-19, and has now completed their mandatory isolation period, is it safe to be around them? How do we know they are safe to be around? Is there a risk that they could still be infectious?

- It is safe to be around a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, once they:
  - Isolate for 10 days from the start of their symptoms AND their symptoms have resolved; OR
  - Isolate for 10 days from the date they were tested AND they continue to have no symptoms, even if they tested positive for COVID-19 and had no symptoms to begin with.
- Children under 18 years of age do not need to isolate if they have only one of a runny nose or sore throat, but should stay home until well. Review [this question](#) for more details.
- Current evidence indicates people with mild or moderate COVID-19 are no longer infectious by day 10 after symptom onset as long as their symptoms have resolved. Testing to see if a person is negative after they have tested positive for COVID-19 is not recommended or required at this time.
- Some people who have severe disease requiring hospitalization or admission to ICU, or who are immune compromised may be infectious for longer than 10 days. Their healthcare provider can provide advice about when they are no longer infectious.

39. I have a child going to school/childcare and am unsure what steps I should take if my child feels unwell or is a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. Where can I find more information?

- AHS has released Guidance for Parents of Children Attending School and/or Childcare which provides specific information about what to do if a child feels unwell and/or has been notified by AHS as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19. We encourage you to share this resource and learn more at [ahs.ca/parentcovidguide](https://ahs.ca/parentcovidguide).
- As of Oct. 7, AHS started notifying parents of close contacts in schools by email rather than by phone. We believe this will streamline our notification process, better support school administrators, and notify parents and guardians faster.
- Visit [alberta.ca/returntoschool](https://alberta.ca/returntoschool) for more information and guidance on re-entry for the 2020/21 school year.

40. I or a family member must isolate or quarantine but don't have paid leave or other income support. What options for funding is there?

- Government financial aid plans may be available for those that are unable to come to work due to isolate or quarantine that do not have access to paid leave or other income support.
- Review the information provided by the [Government of Alberta](https://www.alberta.ca) and the AHS [Record of Employment \(ROE\) for COVID-19](#) for further details.

41. I must take time off work to care for a dependant. Is there financial aid available to me?

- Effective Oct. 9, 2020, the Government of Canada announced changes to financial aid, including a new sick leave benefit and a new caregiver benefit for those forced to take time off work to care for a dependent because of the pandemic.
- Financial aid may be available for those who are unable to come to work due to isolation requirements who do not have access to paid leave or other income support.
- You can learn more about the benefits and supports available [here](#).

42. I am not having symptoms, but I'm concerned about COVID-19 and want to talk to someone. Should I call Health Link?

- Please visit the following websites if you have further general questions about what COVID-19 is, how it is spread, or how many cases there are in Alberta and the world at present. You can call Health Link 811 if you have additional questions about what you need to do to protect yourself and your family against getting a COVID-19 infection.
  - Alberta Health: [alberta.ca/covid19](https://alberta.ca/covid19)
  - Public Health Agency of Canada: [canada.ca](https://canada.ca)
  - World Health Organization: [who.int](https://who.int)

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

43. I am worried about catching COVID-19. Should I wear gloves when outside of my house or in public places?

- Medical gloves are a very important component of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers. However, gloves do not need to be worn by members of the general public during their daily activities, such as when grocery shopping.
- Gloves can create a false sense of security. If not used and disposed of properly, wearing gloves may provide another surface for the virus to live on – potentially encouraging virus transmission.
- Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene.
- We recommend frequent and thorough [hand washing](#) (with soap and water for 20 seconds) or hand hygiene using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if hands are not visibly dirty, and covering your mouth

when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching your face, nose or mouth regardless of whether gloves are being worn. These remain the best evidence-based ways to prevent the spread of respiratory illness.

- For those who choose to wear gloves, proper glove use must be practiced:
  - Hands should always be washed and/or sanitized prior to putting on gloves and after taking gloves off.
  - Gloves should be changed when they become soiled or torn.
  - Change gloves if you touch your face – eyes, nose or mouth – or cover a cough or sneeze with your hands while wearing gloves.
  - Disposable gloves should be thrown out and not used again once they have been taken off.
  - Reusable gloves must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

#### 44. I am worried about catching COVID-19. Should I wear a mask if I have to leave my house or when in public?

- On December 8, 2020, the Government of Alberta made masking mandatory for all indoor public spaces, workplaces and places of worship. Review [the website](#) for more information.
- Face coverings are another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces. Additionally, wearing a mask may stop you from touching your nose and mouth.
- If you are in public and are unable to maintain physical distancing and are wearing a non-medical mask or face covering:
  - Ensure your mask is well-fitted and does not gape at the sides.
  - Be aware that masks can become contaminated on the outside. Avoid moving or adjusting the mask. Assume the mask has been contaminated and take proper precautions.
  - Critically, if you wear a mask, you must wash your hands before putting it on, as well as before and after taking it off.
  - Cloth masks should be worn only a short time, as there is some evidence that they can trap virus particles after they become damp, which may put the wearer at greater risk.
  - For those wearing non-medical masks, it may be prudent to carry a bag with several clean masks in it, as well as a plastic bag that can be used to safely store used masks until they can be washed at home.
  - It is critical that used masks be carefully handled to avoid spreading infection to others.
- Frequent and thorough hand washing, [physical distancing](#), covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing and avoiding touching your face, nose or mouth remain the best evidence-based ways to prevent the spread of respiratory illness.

## Alberta's Relaunch Strategy

#### 45. What restrictions remain in place when gathering in groups?

- The Government of Alberta announced [new restrictions](#) to protect the health and safety of all Albertans.
  - On December 8, 2020, the Government of Alberta made masking mandatory for all indoor public spaces, workplaces and places of worship.
  - Effective Dec. 13, 2020, working from home is mandatory when physical presence is not required. Review [the website](#) for more information.
- More information on public health measures can be found [here](#). You can also check the [GOA site](#) for the most updated information on gatherings and cohorting.
- All existing guidance and legal orders remain in place in all areas. Specific information related to your local community is available, [here](#).
- Check the [restricted and non-restricted services GOA page](#) for the most recent information on which business are able to open and what restrictions must be followed.

46. What will the Alberta Government be watching for as we move forward with the relaunch strategy in Alberta?

- The re-launch strategy is dependent on monitoring the healthcare system, with careful attention to COVID-19 hospitalizations and ICU admissions throughout this period.
- [Confirmed cases and rates of new infections](#) will be monitored on an ongoing basis to inform proactive responses in localized areas of the province. Decisions will be applied at both provincial and local levels, where necessary.
- While restrictions are gradually eased across the province, an outbreak may mean that they need to be strengthened temporarily in a local area.
- During each phase of re-launch, we must still continue to practice health recommendations including hand washing, staying home when sick and maintaining physical distance.

## AHS' Operations

47. How will AHS decide which surgeries, procedures, exams and appointments will proceed?

- AHS will continue to balance the safety of patients and staff while resuming services for Albertans waiting for care.
- Decisions on which services proceed are based on clinical need, with those most in need and waiting longest booked first. These decisions are made within each zone, and are also informed by the pandemic response in different parts of the province.
- AHS will reach out to patients directly to reschedule their procedures.

48. How will Alberta and AHS address the backlog of surgeries created by the pandemic?

- On Sept. 10, Alberta Health and AHS [announced a plan to clear the surgical backlog](#) created during the pandemic, by increasing surgical activity volume to 150 per cent in order to meet the 2023 Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI) commitment of providing all scheduled surgery within clinically acceptable times. This plan will support surgical activity in both urban and rural communities across the province.
- For more information, see the [news release](#).

## Visiting Loved Ones at an AHS Facility

As the pandemic evolves family support and visitation in acute care and continuing care settings will continue to be adjusted. These changes reflect the balance we must keep to address the ongoing risk of COVID-19, as well as the well-being of patients and residents as well as families, visitors, staff, physicians and volunteers. For the most up-to-date version of the visitation guidelines, please visit [www.ahs.ca/visitation](http://www.ahs.ca/visitation).

48. Can I go with a loved one to Urgent Care or to the Emergency Department?

- Yes. In Ambulatory Clinics including Emergency Department/Urgent Care, patients may identify one designated support person to accompany them.
- All support persons must be over the age of 14 for adult clinic visits. If visiting the Alberta Children's Hospital or the Stollery Children's Hospital, the Designated Support Person must be 18 years of age or older.

49. Can I visit a loved one in hospital?

- For the most up-to-date version of the enhanced visitation guidelines and information on screening for people visiting residents and patients is available at [www.ahs.ca/visitation](http://www.ahs.ca/visitation).

50. Am I allowed to visit a patient in an acute care facility on outbreak?

- The extent of restrictions will vary site-to-site due to patient circumstances, operational considerations and ability to maintain physical distancing. More information is available at [ahs.ca/visitation](https://ahs.ca/visitation).

51. What is the difference between a designated support person(s) and a visitor?

- An important part of this step is defining the designated support Person(s), what that role entails, who those individuals are to patients, and how designated support person(s) are different than visitors.
- **A Designated Support Person is:**
  - Someone identified by the patient as an important support
  - Someone the patient wants involved in their care and health matters
  - A relative, legal guardian, close friend or formal/informal caregiver
- Everyone else, who is not designated by a patient or resident, are considered visitors.
- Designated family/support persons should assess their risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19 before they enter an AHS site. To support this, we have created two brochures for designated family/support persons: [Know Your Risk](#) and [Know Your Role](#).
- **A Visitor is:**
  - Not involved in the patient/resident's health care
  - Someone whose time with the patient is discretionary and usually temporary
  - Visiting for purposes that are more social in nature
- Patients can determine who will be their designated support person and the extent the person is involved in their care, including collaborating with the healthcare team.

52. Will designated support persons and visitors be screened prior to entering an acute care setting?

- Effective Oct. 13, AHS has implemented an enhanced [designated support and visitor screening tool](#) in all acute care sites.
- This screening tool was updated to provide clarity and understanding for the screeners, designated supports and visitors when they enter a site. It is intended to be done verbally. No personal information will be saved.
- Updates include:
  - Ensure individuals entering a site have not had any new or worsening symptoms that started in the last 10 days, including symptoms such as vomiting and diarrhea in the last 48 hours.
  - Further simplified and specified questions to ensure less grey area in answers when it comes to close contacts.
  - Guidance regarding individuals testing positive in the past 10 days or awaiting results of test because of symptoms.
  - Guidance regarding people who have had any instruction to quarantine in the last 14 days.
- Exemptions are included for designated support persons for pediatric patients, maternity or dependent adults based on the current guidelines, patient situation, site and care team.

53. Can I visit a resident in long term care, supportive living or congregate living?

- As of July 23, 2020, continuing care facilities will operate under a new approach to family support and visitation based on the [CMOH Order 29-2020](#). This Order will be followed by all licensed supportive living, long-term care and hospice facilities.
- Residents of these sites are at extreme risk if exposed to COVID-19, therefore a safe visitation approach is required.
- **Indoor visits:**



- Each resident or alternate decision maker may designate **up to two designated support persons** (over the age of 18) who are essential to maintaining mental and physical health.
- Additional visitors may be given access in specific situations including end-of-life, change in health status or other pressing circumstances (e.g. financial or legal matters, family crisis).
- **Outdoor visits:**
  - Up to five individuals, including the resident, may participate in outdoor visits, if consistent with site policy and public health measures.
- For more information please review [CMOH Order 29-2020](#), [Protecting Residents at Congregate Care Facilities](#) and [What to Expect](#), before your visit.
- Book a visit using the [Request a Visit](#) tool.

**54. I've recently travelled and am in quarantine. Can I receive an exemption to visit a patient or resident who is receiving critical care or end-of-life care?**

- Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services have established a process for persons seeking exemption from either federal and/or provincial quarantine to visit a patient, client or resident who is receiving critical care for a life-threatening illness or imminent end-of-life care at an AHS, Covenant or continuing care facility or in a home setting.
- This applies to all AHS and non-AHS facilities, including acute care, continuing care, hospice and home settings where staff, contractors or subcontractors are providing care.
- There are three process options:
  - Facility (acute care, continuing care, hospice)
  - Non-facility (home setting)
  - Coming from outside of Canada
- This [process](#) does not apply if the person requesting exemption is symptomatic or has COVID-19 as they are no longer in quarantine and are required under [Section 6 of CMOH Order 28-2020](#) to isolate.
- The request may be initiated by the patient, client or resident seeking visitation, their alternate decision maker, or the individual requesting to visit.
- For people travelling to Alberta from outside Canada for a compassionate reason, they will need both provincial and federal exemptions from mandatory quarantine.
- These individuals must receive advance approval from the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) before travelling to and entering Canada.
- Check this [page](#) for more information or review the [FAQ](#).

**55. Is there an online booking tool to allow family members to schedule visits with patients at a continuing care site?**

- Albertans who would like to request a visit at participating AHS, Capital Care, Carewest and Covenant Health continuing care sites can go to [AHS.ca/ccvisit](#) and complete the online booking request form specifying the location and preferred date and time of the visit.
- If a request cannot be accommodated, the submitter will receive an email directing you to request a visit for another date or time.
- Participating locations will have a link to the online booking request tool. All other sites will have their contact information available on the page for Albertans looking to request a visit by phone.

**Travel:**

**56. UPDATED Am I allowed to travel outside the province?**

- Responsible travel within Alberta is permitted, including to vacation homes, cabins, cottages, hotels and commercial accommodations, campgrounds, national and provincial parks. Physical distancing and gathering restrictions still apply.

- Non-essential travel outside the province is not recommended. The [Canada/US border](#) also remains closed to non-essential travel.
- Find more information on current travel restrictions [here](#).
- Refer to [this question](#) for more information on testing after travel.

### 57. What do I do if I am returning to Alberta from outside of Canada?

- The Government of Canada has implemented a mandatory 14-day quarantine, under the [Quarantine Act](#), for travellers returning to Canada.
- All travellers returning from outside Canada are:
  - legally required to [quarantine](#) for 14 days, and
  - monitor for symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, nasal congestion, or sore throat
  - If you become sick during this time, you must [isolate](#) for at least 10 additional days from all other members of your household from the beginning of symptoms or until you are feeling well, whichever takes longer.
    - 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 in your quarantine location/on your own property.
    - You should not leave your quarantine location/your property during the 14 days of quarantine unless you have made safe arrangements to be [tested](#) or you require urgent medical attention.
- If you experience symptoms use the [online assessment tool](#) to schedule an appointment. If the Internet is not an option, [811](#) can book an appointment.
- Call 911 if you have symptoms that need immediate medical attention. Inform them that you may have COVID-19.
- Find more information [here](#).

### 58. I recently travelled. How do I find out if someone on my flight tested positive for COVID-19?

- Albertans should monitor their air travel for flights with confirmed COVID-19 cases, even if the flight was within Canada. Flights that have confirmed cases and the affected seats are posted online by the Government of Canada.
- If you recently returned from a flight:
  - [Check the federal list of affected flights for updates](#)
    - All passengers from international flights are legally required to [quarantine](#) for 14 days.
    - Passengers in affected seats from domestic flights are considered close contacts and are at risk of exposure. You are legally required to [quarantine](#) for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- Monitor for symptoms such as cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat.
  - If you become sick during this time, you must [isolate](#) for at least 10 additional days from the beginning of symptoms or until you are feeling well, whichever takes longer. Children under 18 are exempt from mandatory isolation for having a runny nose or sore throat, but should stay home until well.

## COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout:

AHS is working with the [Government of Alberta](#) to distribute COVID-19 vaccine through a phased immunization program. More information is available at [www.ahs.ca/covidvaccine](http://www.ahs.ca/covidvaccine).