



novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

An update for our partners

April 15, 2020: Dr Christopher Sikora, Medical Officer of Health

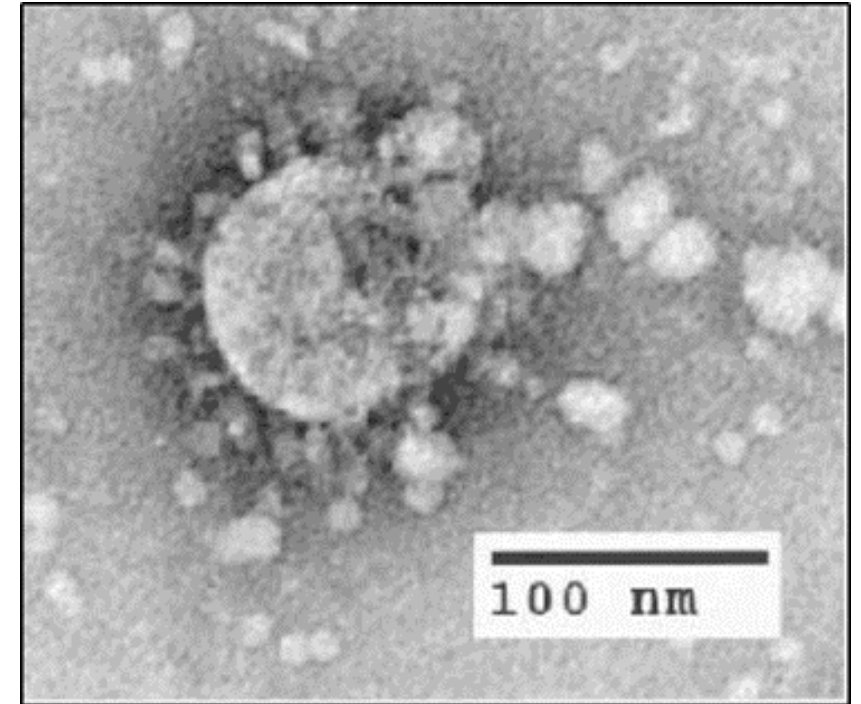
Objectives

- Outline current context
- Share what's new in the COVID-19 response
- Discuss modeling released by the Government of Alberta last week
- Answer your questions

*For information more about what COVID-19 is
and how you can help stop the spread
visit www.ahs.ca/covid*

What is a novel Coronavirus?

- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses
 - Some coronaviruses cause respiratory illness in people, ranging from common colds to severe pneumonias
 - Some can infect humans while others infect only animals
- COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that has not been previously detected in humans



What do we know about COVID-19?

- Incubation period is up to 14 days following exposure; mean incubation of 5 days
- How is it spread?
 - Mainly by larger droplets from coughing, sneezing or direct contact with a sick person or with surfaces they have recently touched
 - Possible spread from an infected person who doesn't yet have symptoms, but this is unlikely to contribute significantly to the spread of the virus
 - No evidence of transmission by imported goods

Current Context

AHS is encouraging Albertans to receive their information from reputable sources. Up to date information about COVID-19 cases can be found here:

- [Global Cases](#)
- [Canadian Cases](#)
- [Alberta Cases](#)
- [Edmonton Zone Data](#)

AHS Response

- Pre-existing pandemic plans have been guiding our response since early January when the situation in China was first identified
- January 29, 2020: Provincial ECC response structure established
- March 9: ZEOCs established in each zone to coordinate locally
- Municipalities have established their own EOCs, and are coordinating with AHS and the Government of Alberta
- *Focus: reducing transmission and increasing health system capacity to care for people who become infected and require care and support*

AHS Response

Communication remains a priority:

- Sessions like this are being held across the province
- AHS web updated daily ahs.ca/covid
- Daily email sent to stakeholders (community.engagement@ahs.ca)
- Hundreds of questions are responded to daily by email and social media
- Health Link (811) providing advice, including the need for testing
- COVID-19 online assessment tool created
- Public Health is notified of all positive lab results and immediately follows up with the case and investigates for any contacts

What's new in the last week?

- Expanding testing strategy to all who are symptomatic
- Wearing masks may be considered as an additional measure to physical distancing particularly for those situations where it may be difficult to avoid close contact - such as grocery stores or public transit
- Stricter measures to protect those living in congregate care, including restricting visitation to long-term care, continuing care and hospital facilities

For the most up to date information about COVID-19 and how you can help stop the spread visit www.ahs.ca/covid

What's new in the last week?

- Close to 1,600 facilities/settings with vulnerable populations contacted province-wide to proactively review preventive measures & plans to protect residents/clients, and to discuss outbreak response measures/requirements
- New requirements for organizations to report possible outbreaks ASAP (single case of illness in staff or resident instead of two or more)
- Single point of contact for organizations to report and get expedited assistance with testing, advice on control measures, access to personal protective equipment, and assistance with staffing, if required

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Pandemic Modeling

- Public health surveillance describes what is happening while modelling helps us understand what *might* happen
- Models support decision making on public health measures and help the health system plan for the number of expected patients
- Data from other countries can be used to create scenarios for the spread of COVID-19
- Testing and surveillance information allows for development of more accurate model scenarios and forecasting

Alberta's pandemic models are available at alberta.ca/covid

What can the public do to protect themselves?

- Wash your hands often and well
 - Cover your cough
 - Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick
 - Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched
 - Practice physical distancing
 - Stay at home and away from others if you are feeling ill
 - Do not travel outside of the country
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What can businesses to do protect themselves?

- Ensure business continuity plans are established in the event that staff are unable to work
- Support staff to work remotely where possible
- Engage in smaller meetings
- Don't host or attend conferences
- Don't require sick notes for staff who are sick

*Additional information for Alberta employers
is available at: alberta.ca/covid*

What can our partners do to protect themselves and their community?

- Practice a zero tolerance policy when you or someone you know is sick
- Encourage people in your community to comply with their quarantine order to self-isolate for 14 days upon return from international travel
- Practice social distancing: keep at least 6 feet from others when going out for groceries, medical trips and other essential needs
- Stay up to date on the latest information www.ahs.ca/covid
- Help ensure people in your community know where to get reliable information

Questions:

How does Alberta's projections compare to other parts of Canada?

Alberta is trending well compared to other jurisdictions

More information, including answers to technical questions regarding the development of Alberta's models, is available at alberta.ca/covid

When will we know if we have been successful in 'flattening the curve'?

We are already starting to see the impact of Albertans' commitment to following public health guidelines

Commitment to public health measures continues to be needed to ensure we have the lowest possible number of infections and minimize illness and death due to COVID-19

Questions:

Do you have a sense of when Alberta will change its recommendations regarding travel, return to work, schools opening, etc.?

At this time we cannot say, but AHS will continue to work with the Government of Alberta and follow the most up to date information.

Would mandating the wearing of masks protect each of us from the moisture that others express?

Learn more about Alberta's recommendations regarding wearing masks in the [Public FAQs](#).

Do you have a timeframe for AHS to resume testing unrelated to COVID-19?

For non-COVID-19 related healthcare, please reach out to your primary care provider. Many physicians in Alberta are now providing virtual appointments.

Mental Health Resources

- Limit media and news time
- Empower yourself (identify what you do still have control over)
 - Shovel a neighbor's walk or help with yard work
 - Phone a friend or relative who may be lonely
- Connect with others safely (e.g. safe social media sites)
- Take care of your physical health
- Manage your stress
- Reach out if you need help

Mental Health Resources

Dr. Nicholas Mitchell's Mental Wellness Moment:



Help in Tough Times: multiple resources @ ahs.ca/covid

Take Away Messages

- COVID-19 is transmitting in our communities
 - You **must** self isolate for 14 days if you are sick or have returned from international travel
 - Practice physical distancing, whether you are ill or not
 - No visitors are permitted at hospitals or continuing care facilities – consider other ways to stay connected
 - As the situation is constantly evolving check **ahs.ca/covid** for updates and guidance
 - Use the self assessment tool **ahs.ca/covid** before calling **Health Link at 811**, if you have questions about risk or symptoms
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Resources

- AHS: www.ahs.ca/covid19
- Alberta Health: www.alberta.ca/covid
- Health Canada: canada.ca/en/health-canada
- World Health Organization: who.int/health-topics