

COVID-19 Status

April 7, 2020

We have confirmed 98 new cases of COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 1,348. Of the total cases, 204 are suspected to be through community transmission from an unknown source, 90 have been hospitalized and 31 admitted to intensive care units (ICU). Currently, there are 40 cases in hospital, with 16 in ICU. The number of recovered cases is now at 361.

Sadly, again today, we must report another death related to COVID-19 - a women in her 80s in the Calgary Zone. We extend our condolences to her family and friends and to the healthcare workers and staff who were caring for her. In total, 24 Albertans have now passed away from COVID-19.

Things You Need to Know

Testing Criteria Expanded Further

Alberta continues to lead the way in Canada for our testing, second in the world, only to Australia. In addition to completing as many tests as we can, we are continually evaluating testing criteria as we move through the evolution of this pandemic. This ensures we are testing the right groups and using our lab resources most effectively.

With this in mind, testing priorities in Alberta were expanded this weekend, to include individuals with shortness of breath, runny nose, cough, fever or sore throat in the following roles:

- Group home and shelter workers
- First responders, including firefighters
- Those involved in COVID-19 enforcement, such as police, peace, bylaw and fish and wildlife officers and public health inspectors
- Provincial and federal correctional facility staff

Additionally, effective 8 a.m. April 7 (tomorrow), any Albertan aged 65 years old or older who has fever, cough, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat, will also be eligible for testing.

As noted by Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, identifying infections in these people will help us prevent the spread to high-risk populations living in close quarters, more closely trace any community transmission among the testing groups, and provide more valuable information on the effects of our public health measures.

The online assessment tools for COVID-19 have been updated, for both public and healthcare workers, enforcement and first responders. Any individual experiencing illness should visit www.ahs.ca/covid, and complete the online assessment tool relevant for their situation.

Wearing of Non-medical Masks in Public

Our knowledge of this virus and how it spreads continues to grow. We are continuously reviewing the emerging evidence on COVID-19, working with our provincial and territorial colleagues to inform decision-making. This includes analyzing the evidence regarding non-medical mask use while in public.

According to recent data, asymptomatic spread appears to be happening more often than what was first thought. In light of this, Alberta, along with the rest of Canada, is expanding our approach and our recommendations for Albertans.

It is critical to continue practicing the public health measures we have in place, which are proven to be the most effective ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including hand-washing, [physical distancing](#) and staying home when sick. Adding to these measures, and not replacing them, wearing a non-medical mask or face covering may be of benefit to members of the public, or healthcare workers while outside of the workplace, who find themselves in locations where they cannot keep two metres' distance from others.

As Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health noted, while wearing a non-medical mask will not prevent **you** from getting sick, it may be helpful in protecting **others** around you by covering your mouth and nose to prevent your respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces. Additionally, wearing a mask may stop you from touching your nose and mouth.

If you choose to wear a non-medical mask or face covering, there are guidelines to follow on ahs.ca/covid19. Medical masks—including surgical, medical procedure masks and respirators like N95 masks—are needed for healthcare workers. It is extremely important that we continue to use AHS supplies of medical masks for healthcare purposes. As always, the most important steps you can

take to prevent the spread of infection remain the same: wash your hands frequently, and if you're sick, stay home.

In the Zones

Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – Central Zone Communities Coming Together

Teams across the Central Zone continue to ensure the communities we serve feel supported, and educated, when it comes to the COVID-19 response.

More than 120 community partners – including mayors, reeves, council members, Indigenous leaders, and foundation, auxiliary, and health advisory council members, participated in a series of virtual town hall meetings with Central Zone leadership. Lead Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Ifeoma Achebe, Chief Zone Officer, Janice Stewart and Interim Zone Medical Director, Dr. Jennifer Bestard, provided virtual presentations to update partners on the current COVID -19 situation, AHS' response to date, and what to expect in the coming weeks and months. They were supported by leaders from Environmental Public Health, Seniors Health, Primary Care, Emergency Disaster Management and the Community Engagement and Communications team.

Central Zone teams have also established regular meetings with leaders from Indigenous communities across the zone including Maskwacis, Big Horn, Sunchild, and O'Chiese First Nations. The meetings are designed to assist with pandemic response planning, and provide support and guidance on important response measures, including laboratory testing and PPE acquisition, and to facilitate information requests for community-specific materials. The regular meetings have helped identify unique challenges and opportunities for enhanced collaboration between the communities, AHS and the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch. Response from the communities has been exceptionally positive, with many comments of gratitude for our assistance and partnership.

First Nation Telehealth and Onehealth Resources:

- Onehealth can be found at <https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19>
- Telehealth Portal can be found at: https://fntn.ca/DesktopModules/TSAGTHSkinObjects/images/slider_01.jpg

Thank you and stay safe.

*****Please share this information as appropriate*****

*****For Alberta Health Services – Indigenous specific questions/concerns please**

email ahs.ecc.operations.ih@ahs.ca ***

*****For Indigenous Services Canada please**

email sac.cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab.isc@canada.ca ***

Josipa Pavicic on behalf of Nadine McRee

