

COVID-19 Status

APRIL 29, 2020

We have confirmed 154 new cases of COVID-19 over the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 4,850. Of the total cases, we suspect 524 cases may be the result of community transmission, 202 have been hospitalized and 47 have been in an Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Currently, there are 82 cases in hospital, with 21 in an ICU. 1,800 cases have now recovered.

It is with heavy hearts that we report the sad news of five additional deaths in the past 24 hours, bringing the provincial total to 80 lives lost in Alberta related to COVID-19. AHS extends its deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of these individuals, who are grieving these losses in exceptionally difficult circumstances.

3,239 tests were completed over the last 24 hours, bringing our total COVID-19 tests to 138,681 since the start of the pandemic.

Things You Need to Know

Today, Alberta Health Services recognizes the [National Day of Mourning](#) – a day to remember our colleagues who have been injured, disabled or lost their lives on the job. Flags at our facilities are flying at half-mast in their honour.

In these unprecedented times, the importance of safety — one of our core values — is even more of a priority for us all. This day reminds us to speak up and work together to prevent injury, illness and death in the workplace.

Modelling Update

Today, the government provided [updated modelling scenarios](#) to better predict the impact of COVID-19 in Alberta, which include a new “low” modelling scenario estimating 298 Albertans will require hospitalization, and 95 will require critical care when the virus reaches its peak. If current trends continue, this scenario will become the most likely scenario for Alberta.

Updated modelling scenarios continue to estimate that Alberta’s outbreak will reach its peak in late May. However, the number of Albertans hospitalized at the peak of the virus is predicted to be lower than originally estimated. This reflects Alberta’s experience over the past few weeks and the proportion of cases actually entering hospital and intensive care units. More information about the predicted modelling is available [here](#).

These figures show that the efforts of Albertans to adhere to public health guidelines are making a critical difference in the fight against COVID-19. We want to emphasize that the forecasts shared today are positive news, as we start to see the results from the collective

sacrifices we've been making. But we must remember, this fight is far from over. Modelling is hypothetical and based on predictions. None of the scenarios presented is guaranteed; best case outcomes require us to remain vigilant, so we don't see dangerous spikes in cases.

As Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, explained today, the models often give a sense of a defined peak on a line that travels up and down. The reality is that as we've slowed the spread, we've flattened the line, as hoped. It means we are lowering rates of infection and creating more of a steady line. This virus will be with us for months to come, until we have vaccines to prevent it. Until then, ideally, we can continue in a steady state to keep infection rates low, to help the health system manage the demand and to protect the most vulnerable in our province.

Healthcare Worker Online Assessment Tool Update

Effective today, asymptomatic healthcare staff working at long-term care and supportive living facilities, currently under COVID-19 outbreak declarations, can now access referral to testing for COVID-19, through the Healthcare Worker online self-assessment tool at ahs.ca/covid.

This same tool is already being used by any healthcare worker with symptoms of COVID-19. The new prompt within the tool will ensure that workers at long-term care and licensed supportive living facilities (including lodges) with active COVID-19 outbreaks can be tested before they experience symptoms, potentially further reducing risk of asymptomatic transmission.

This addition is in alignment with Chief Medical Officer of Health's requirements for asymptomatic testing of both staff and residents at long-term and supportive living facilities under outbreak.

Asymptomatic Swabbing Guidelines

At the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, from April 23, 2020, once either a resident or staff member tests positive and has a confirmed case of COVID-19 in any licensed supportive living setting, including lodges, or long-term care sites, there is a requirement to offer swabbing to all asymptomatic residents for COVID-19 on the affected unit(s). A guidance document has been created and emailed to all operators. It will also be available on the [Continuing Care Connection site](#) and ahs.ca/covid.

Within the document, the process to follow is outlined for all facilities. Of particular note:

If a swab is positive, contact and droplet isolation is required in providing care for those residents.

For residents whose swabs are negative, enhanced monitoring for development of symptoms is recommended.

Asymptomatic staff whose swabs are negative can return to work and do not need to self-isolate.

We recognize that each zone has identified processes to either expand the number and type of staff available to assist with swabbing, or to provide the swabbing required, depending on the size of the outbreak and implications for staffing.

Visitor Restrictions Update

Throughout the pandemic, AHS has been taking steps to restrict visitors to protect our patients and residents, who are at greater risk of severe illness. When we made the difficult decision to implement a no visitor policy in all AHS sites, we recognized that there are special circumstances where visitors are essential to the well-being and care of certain patients. To this end, we have updated the [current visitor guidance](#) to clarify exceptions to visitor restrictions in situations where visitation is essential for care and support of patients with specific challenges, in end of life situations, and in specific acute care or outpatient settings. We have also provided further guidance around decision-making for end of life visitation.

We will continue to verify and screen all visitors permitted under these updated exceptions prior to entering the facility. Visitor guidelines may also be updated in the future to reflect our continued engagement with the Health Advisory Councils, the Provincial Advisory Councils, the Patient and Family Advisory Council and Indigenous Health.

We recognize that the temporary visitor restrictions we have put in place are difficult for families and loved ones. Please continue to encourage patients and families to use other methods to be in touch with loved ones, such as by phone or video calls.

Zoom Webinars and Office Hours

AHS Virtual Health offers tools to support healthcare encounters between clinicians and with patients, including patients in [self-isolation](#), those who are unable to attend an AHS clinic, or those located in rural and remote areas. Our goal is to support quality virtual care, anytime, anywhere. AHS staff, clinicians in all disciplines, and physicians can visit ahs.ca/virtualhealth for more information and resources.

Multilingual COVID-19 Information

To access COVID-19 information in languages other than English, visit ahs.ca/covid and simply click on the language of choice from the list, which appears horizontally on top of the page.

As always, interpretation services continue to be available, 24/7 through 811 and language lines. Use standard processes to access this service from the frontline.

Guidance on Safe Discharge from Hospital

Yesterday's update shared guidance on common criteria for discharge for COVID-19 patients, used in other jurisdictions, including administering two negative SARS-CoV-2 NP tests, 24 hours apart. This context was provided based on guidelines from various health organizations and health regions, but was not meant to suggest that COVID-19 testing is being recommended as a precondition to discharge by the Scientific Advisory Group in this review.

The recommendations within the AHS Scientific Advisory Group Rapid Review provide guidance for discharge based on clinical criteria, but in these recommendations, repeated COVID-19 testing is not generally required before discharge or for clearing of COVID-positive status. For more information, please see the [Rapid Review](#).

In the Zones

Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC) Update – Calgary Collaborating to Protect Calgary’s Homeless

The Calgary Zone has been hard at work partnering with community agencies to protect and care for the city’s homeless during the pandemic. The Assisted Self Isolation Site (ASIS) is a hotel that’s been repurposed to temporarily house vulnerable individuals in separate, private rooms, who are symptomatic, have tested positive, or have been in close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.

Through ASIS, vulnerable individuals receive medical support in a safe, private and secure environment. Those experiencing homelessness who appear to be symptomatic, will be pre-screened and triaged by medical personnel at hospital emergency departments and emergency shelters, and will be transported to the ASIS, as necessary.

In addition to providing funding to The Alex Community Health Centre for delivery of care and medical services to ASIS clients, AHS is supporting communication activities by hosting town hall meetings and through stakeholder relations. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is also providing temporary transportation assistance.

The Calgary Homeless Foundation is the project’s lead - partners include the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the City of Calgary, the Calgary Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), CUPS Calgary, The Alex Community Health Centre, emergency shelters and other homeless agencies. With a recent outbreak declared at Calgary shelters, the ASIS is proving to be a valuable resource in helping to reduce community transmission among a population that might otherwise have challenges complying with orders for physical distancing.

To celebrate the tremendous effort of all organizations who are addressing the needs of the city’s homeless and more vulnerable, the Calgary Tower will be lit orange on May 7.

Be Well - Be Kind

Shout Out

Some of our teams provide direct patient care on the frontline, while others make the care we provide possible by supporting programs and infrastructure for our healthcare system, behind the scenes. Whether you are meeting patients face-to-face, or ensuring care teams have what they need to deliver care, you are an equally important part of the AHS team.

Community Acts of Kindness

Meals for those in Need

Alberta Health Services Advisory Council members are active volunteers and leaders in their communities, stepping up even more during these challenging times. Varinder Bhullar, a long-time member of the AHS Provincial Advisory Council on Cancer, supports his community in many ways.

Recently, Varinder, a local businessman and president of a non-profit society called Green Scholars of Alberta, turned his focus to helping provide free meals to members of his local community impacted by the pandemic. In first two weeks they were able to give 1,200 meals and have now extended the program through the month of May to help even more Albertans in need. His efforts have been recently covered in [news media](#) and [social media](#).

Message for a Pandemic

The sign below is posted outside an Edmonton school. It succinctly sums up the basics of this pandemic: we all miss connecting in our usual ways and we continue to feel out of sorts without our regular activities; these changes are in place to protect us and others, and we know they are working; by following the guidelines, we are examples to all Albertans of how to be safe during this pandemic.



New social media campaign about resilience:

The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative recently launched a new social media campaign about the science of resilience that you may be interested in. Feel free to share with your networks:

<https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/brainstory-pro>

Addiction and Mental Health Branch, Alberta Health

Thank you for giving us your trust. And thank you for showing up every day with a passion that drives you to do your very best for those we serve. You give us strength through your determination and commitment.

Stay safe.

Please Note: This message has been modified from the AHS Daily Updates.

*****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

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Provincial response COVID-19 pandemic

Information for Indigenous communities – April 16, 2020

Some day-to-day activities are harder to do when we are physically distant from each other or we need to spend more time at home. What happens when you need to bring things into your home, like groceries?

It is important to remember that the COVID-19 virus mainly spreads from person-to-person by larger droplets, like from a cough or sneeze. It can also be passed by touching contaminated objects or surfaces, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth.

While the virus can live under ideal circumstances (such as on stainless steel) for several days, it is generally only live on surfaces like paper or plastic for a few hours. There is no evidence of the virus being spread by packaging, mail, grocery goods or other items.

The best steps to prevent the spread is to wash your hands, regularly clean surfaces and follow the other recommended steps on [alberta.ca/COVID19](https://www.alberta.ca/COVID19).

Taking care of finances

Many people in Alberta have been struggling to match payments with their incomes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Look to these programs and services for support.

\$2 billion for job creation

Investing in capital maintenance, like pothole repairs and school improvements, will get thousands of people back to work safely around the province. These are the kinds of projects that can happen now, while kids are studying at home and fewer vehicles travel the highways.

These projects should be starting in the coming days and weeks to keep companies operating and people working.

[Read more on job creation](#)

<https://www.alberta.ca/release.cfm?xID=70048BECAA8D7-08BF-B86B-3E55D7AB543E4E26>

Agriculture job connector

A new online tool connects farmers and agri-producers with people who are looking for work.

[Post or find a job online](#)

<https://www.alberta.ca/agriculture-job-connector.aspx>



Help for small businesses

Turn to the Business Link for one-on-one help if you run or are hoping to start your own business.

Business Link strategists can help you with free advice through June 2020, or connect you with free expert sessions with lawyers, accountants, marketing specialists, e-commerce specialists and others.

Prevent the spread. Visit [Alberta.ca/COVID](https://www.alberta.ca/COVID)

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Caring for each other

This is a hard time to be away from the people we care about, especially when we are used to seeing them all the time.

Matching donations

Between April 15 and May 31, the Alberta government is matching up to \$2 million of public donations made to Alberta-based charities and non-profit organizations with COVID-19 fundraising campaigns. Funds will help newcomers, Elders, people with disabilities and people experiencing addictions or homelessness.

[Learn more about matching donations](#)

<https://www.alberta.ca/charitable-donation-matching-program.aspx>

Family violence

If you or someone you know needs help because of family violence, help is available.

[Reach out if you need it](#)

- **Emergency:** call 911
- **Family Violence Information Line:** 310-1818 for anonymous help
- **Alberta provincial abuse helpline:** 1-855-443-5722
- **Child Abuse Hotline:** 1-800-387-5437
- **Protection for Persons in Care Reporting Line:** 1-888-357-9339 to report abuse of an adult receiving care or support services from publicly funded service providers, like hospitals, seniors' lodges, addiction treatment centres and more

Caregivers

Anyone who is caring for family or friends, especially during the pandemic, can turn to Caregivers Alberta for resources, support or community – all available online. A \$3 million grant to the organization will make more services available for those who need them.

[Find resources for caregivers](#)

<http://www.caregiversalberta.ca/>

Getting ready

Humans started about 3 of every 4 wildfires last year.

To ease that risk, the Alberta government put a provincial fire ban in place throughout the

province on April 15. It includes all provincial parks and protected areas. This and a ban of off-highway vehicles (OHV) for recreational use on Crown lands are in place temporarily, so we all limit wildfire risk.



Indigenous people may use OHVs on public land for traditional purposes.

Alberta has also invested money in the FireSmart program, which includes grants to support the most at-risk communities in Alberta, including Indigenous communities.

[Get wildfire information online](#)

<https://wildfire.alberta.ca/> or download the app

<https://apps.apple.com/ca/app/alberta-wildfire/id626977403> for iPhone or iPad

Essential services

Some businesses and services are still available to people at locations we can visit. Those businesses and services need to follow full health care measures, like having sanitation stations and making space for people to distance themselves safely.

To find out if a type of business or service is essential, visit <https://www.alberta.ca/essential-services.aspx>

Resources

Visit alberta.ca/COVID for the latest information about provincial programs and supports. You can also call 310-4455 to speak with someone who can help you find the information you need.