

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

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Travelling from Affected Areas (updated Feb 26,2020)

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 in other countries. The risk to Canadian travellers abroad is generally low but will vary depending on the destination. Active travel health notices and travel advice is available at [Health Canada - Latest Travel Health Advice](#) page.

It is important for all travellers to monitor their health when they return to Canada. While abroad, you may have come in contact with COVID-19. Monitor for fever, cough and difficulty breathing for 14 days after you arrive in Canada. If you have these symptoms, contact HealthLine 811 for assessment and direction.

The research and data on COVID-19 continues to grow and evolve. Advice for travellers will be updated based on the latest science available.

The public health risk associated with COVID-19 remains low for Canada. Public health risk is continually reassessed as new information becomes available.

Q: What is the significance of 14 days?

A: Based on the latest science on COVID-19, the time from exposure to developing symptoms can take up to 14 days. In order to prevent spreading, it is important to take extra precautions during this timeframe such as self-isolation or self-monitoring.

Q. What does it mean to self-isolate?

A. Self-isolation means the patient is considered well enough to not require admission to hospital and can remain in their home. Individuals should not attend work, school, daycare, university, social, sporting or cultural events or religious gatherings. The patient should have the ability to care for their symptoms including being able to drink enough liquids. Refer to the [Self-Isolation Information Sheet](#) at saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus for more information.

Q: What is the difference between “self-isolate” and “self-monitor”?

A: Self-isolation is a precautionary approach used to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from people that have been in an area of high disease spread or in close contact with a person with COVID-19. These individuals should not attend work, school, daycare, university, social, sporting or cultural events or religious gatherings. These individuals may not have any symptoms or they may have mild symptoms that can be managed at home. If symptoms develop or worsen, call HealthLine 811 for assessment and direction.

Self-monitoring watching closely for symptoms in yourself or your dependents. When there are no symptoms, continue with your daily activities like attending school or work. At the first sign of symptoms such as increase in body temperature or development of a cough or sore throat or shortness of breath, you should self-isolate and call HealthLine 811 for assessment and direction.

Q: If someone has completed their self-isolation of 14 days, is there still a risk of them having COVID-19?

A: Based on the latest science on COVID-19, the time from exposure to developing symptoms can take up to 14 days. If the person has not developed symptoms over this time, the risk of their having COVID-19 is low and they can return to work or school.

If the person has developed symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) during the period of self-isolation, they should contact Healthline 811 for guidance.

General Information

Q: What is 2019-Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

A: Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). Some cause illness in people, while others circulate among animals. Some coronaviruses transmit easily from person to person while others do not.

COVID-19 is a new virus that has not been previously identified. At present it is causing mild to moderately severe symptoms and some deaths. There is evidence of person-to-person transmission, usually by close contact. As with new viruses, further details will be available as we learn more.

Q: What are the symptoms? How would I know if I have this illness?

A: Common symptoms are fever and respiratory symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, or breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death. Older people and/or those with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, cardiac, respiratory, or immunocompromised patients, may be at higher risk for a more severe form of the disease.

Q: Is there a vaccine that protects against COVID-19?

A: Currently, there is no approved vaccine that protects against coronaviruses, including COVID-19.

Q: How is COVID-19 treated?

A: Like most respiratory illnesses, most people with COVID-19 illness will recover on their own. There is no specific treatment for disease caused by COVID-19. Severe or worsening symptoms may require supportive treatment in hospital.

Q: Can the infection spread easily?

A: The infection transmits via coughing and sneezing (droplet transmission) within two meters. It can also be spread by touching surfaces with the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands. While it is not yet known exactly how long COVID-19 lives on surfaces, preliminary evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to several days. Therefore, isolation at home or hospital is important to prevent transmission.

Protecting Yourself

Q: How do I protect myself against COVID-19?

A: Currently, there is no approved vaccine that protects against coronaviruses in humans.

As a respiratory illness, the best method to protect yourself against COVID-19 is to practice everyday preventive actions, including:

- Practice proper cough and sneezing etiquette (into the bend of your elbow);
- Wash your hands often with soap and water; if soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands;
- Maintain safe food practices; and
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid unnecessary [travel to affected areas](#).

Q: I have a respiratory illness. Should I isolate myself?

A: If you have travelled to Hubei or Iran in the last 14 days, self-isolate at home for 14 days after leaving the area and actively monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, fever and difficulty breathing. Do not go to school, university, work, daycare, sporting or social events or religious gatherings.

If you have traveled from another affected area in the last 14 days but do not have any symptoms, you should monitor your health for 14 days after leaving the area including taking your temperature twice daily. If you develop symptoms, call HealthLine 811 for assessment and direction. If you do not have cough, fever or difficulty breathing, you can go to work or school.

If you have been in close contact with someone who is ill with COVID-19, you should self-isolate for 14 days from your last contact and actively monitor for symptoms.

If you do not have a travel history to/from an affected area and do not have symptoms of a cough or fever, you can go to work or to school.

Q: Should I wear a surgical mask to protect myself from COVID-19?

A: There is no evidence that surgical masks protect people who are not sick. The World Health Organization does not recommend the use of any masks if you do not have a travel history and respiratory symptoms.

If you have respiratory symptoms such as cough or difficulty breathing or fever and a relevant travel history, you should wear a surgical/procedure mask when seeking medical care at a health facility. If you are going to a healthcare facility for treatment of your respiratory illness and do not have a mask, ask for one at the admission desk and one will be provided to you.

Q: Should I wear masks to protect myself as a caregiver in the home?

A: If HealthLine, public health officials or your healthcare provider have advised you to self-isolate, you may be cared for at home.

If you are providing care to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 at home, it's recommended to keep distant from an affected individual as much as possible. Hand hygiene should be performed frequently, preferably using soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub. Wear a surgical mask when in the same room with the affected individual and dispose of the mask immediately after use. Hand hygiene should also be performed following removal of the mask. Eye protection is also recommended.

At the Workplace and School

Q: Our workplace/school has people who have travelled to an affected area. Should they stay home until they know they do not have COVID-19?

A: If you have travelled to Hubei in the last 14 days, self-isolate at home for 14 days after leaving the area and actively monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 including cough, fever and difficulty breathing. Do not go to school, university, work, daycare, sporting or social events or religious gatherings.

If you have traveled from another affected area in the last 14 days but do not have any symptoms, you should monitor your health for 14 days after leaving the area including taking your temperature twice daily. If you develop symptoms, call HealthLine 811 for assessment and direction. If you do not have cough, fever or difficulty breathing, you can go to work or school.

If you have been in close contact with someone who is ill with COVID-19, you should self-isolate for 14 days from your last contact and actively monitor for symptoms.

If you do not have a travel history to/from an affected area and do not have symptoms of a cough or fever, you can go to work or to school.

Q. How do I self-isolate in situations of shared living (eg. family homes, university dorms, apartments, etc)?

A: If a person with symptoms is self-isolating in shared living accommodations such as a dorm room at a university, they should be temporarily accommodated elsewhere or have roommates and family members temporarily relocate. In cases where there may be several people with symptoms awaiting test results, they may co-locate until results are confirmed. Refer to [Self-Isolation Information Sheet](#) and [Infection Control Tips](#) at saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus for more information.

If an ill person is sharing accommodations with someone who might be vulnerable to infection – those with suppressed immune systems or chronic illness, pregnant women, infants, and adults over 65 - relocation is advised to reduce the risk of severe illness for the vulnerable person.

More advice is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation-for-patients-undergoing-testing/guidance-for-nhs-clinicians-on-home-isolation-of-a-patient-while-being-tested-for-wuhan-novel-coronavirus>

Q: I am worried about a coworker who has recently travelled and I want to work from another location. Can my manager approve that?

A: At this time, the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is low in Canada and Saskatchewan. People who have traveled from an affected area or had close contact with someone who is ill with COVID-19 are being asked to self-isolate for 14 days from their last contact.

If travelers are showing symptoms (cough, fever, difficulty breathing), they should call HealthLine 811 to determine the best course of action.

If you are concerned that someone in your workplace has travelled recently, speak with your manager.

Q: Are there special steps my daycare or school can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: COVID-19 is a respiratory illness and is transmitted in the same fashion as influenza. Administrators, teachers, caregivers, parents and students should take the same precautions they do to prevent the spread of influenza in the classroom. Practice good cough/sneeze etiquette (into your elbow or tissue and immediately throw the tissue away), wash hands frequently and immediately after using tissues, and ensure regular environmental cleaning of the facility, particularly high-touch surfaces like doorknobs and faucet handles. Individuals who are sick should stay home.

Q: I have a child in my class or daycare that has developed a fever and shortness of breath. What do I do?

A: If you see symptoms of respiratory illness in a child (fever, coughing, shortness of breath), place that child in a separate space or a two metre distance from other children until their parent or caregiver can come for them. Provide them with tissues to support good cough and sneeze etiquette and remind them to maintain good hand hygiene. After they have been picked up, use a disinfectant cleanser for the surfaces they have contacted.

Its important that a parent or caregiver can pick up the child and that they not take the bus or other mass transit while they are symptomatic. If there is no option except for that child to take the bus, advise the bus driver to try to maintain a two metre distance between them and other passengers for the best protection.

Q: When would a school be closed due to COVID-19?

A: There is currently no widespread transmission of COVID-19 in Canada. At this time, school closures are not recommended for the prevention of COVID-19 transmission. The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends that schools take standard respiratory illness precautions – the same precautions that are recommended every year for cold and influenza season.

As the science and risk situation evolve, public health officials will update this advice.

Risk in Saskatchewan

Q: What happens if there is a confirmed case of the virus in Saskatchewan?

A: Although public health officials anticipate that there will be additional cases of COVID-19 in Canada, the role of public health is to limit the spread through education and surveillance. **The risk of spread in Canada is currently low.** COVID-19 is a respiratory illness, and there are best practices for individuals and health care providers to protect against the spread of respiratory illnesses.

Q: What is Canada doing to prevent further spread into our country?

A: The Public Health Agency of Canada has measures in place at several Canadian international airports to help identify any travelers returning to Canada who may be ill and to raise awareness among travelers about when they should self-isolate and who to call when they arrive at their final destination.

Q: Why is the overall risk to Canadians low?

A: Although the risk of spread of the virus within Canada remains low, we are planning for all possible scenarios and are basing our response on evidence as the science of the novel coronavirus continues to emerge. This is a serious public health issue and there is the possibility that the virus is present in countries that may not have the capacity to detect or contain the virus.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is also sharing information and working with federal, provincial and territorial partners and public health authorities to maintain Canada's preparedness to reduce the potential risk of introduction and spread of this virus in Canada.

Q. Should I be concerned with packages or goods arriving from China or an affected area?

A: At present there is no concern with goods arriving from China or any of the affected areas.

Q. Where can I find more information?

A: Saskatchewan has a dedicated page to keep members of the public informed. Visit www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus. Updated information will be posted as it becomes available.