

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQ for Home Care Clients

December 1, 2020

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 or <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx>.

Healthcare workers are encouraged to visit www.ahs.ca/covid.

Everyone is encouraged to follow the requirements of the current Public Health Act.

1. What is Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that may cause respiratory illness in people, with symptoms ranging from those similar to a common cold to severe pneumonia.

2. What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

- Symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to those for influenza or other respiratory illnesses.
- 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

If you have any of the above symptoms that are new or different from your usual, you should stay home and complete the [COVID-19 online assessment tool](#) to see if you should be tested.

- 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 and pneumonia.
- There is a risk of death in severe cases.
- While we are still learning about how COVID-19 affects people, older persons and persons with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

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.)
- 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. Research on the extent and scale of airborne transmission mode is ongoing. 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.
 - 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.
- People who have COVID-19 can spread it to others before they start to feel sick.

4. What can I do to protect myself and others who come into my home such as health providers?

- Practice social distancing (when possible remain 2 metres/6 feet away from others who are not part of your household).
- Wear a mask when people who are not part of your household or cohort come into your home (includes health workers).
- Wash your hands and ask others to wash their hands upon entering your home.

REMEMBER:

Wearing a mask in public, limiting social events and washing your hands frequently is the best prevention for COVID-19

5. What do I do if I or someone in my household is experiencing symptoms?

You will be contacted prior to your home care visit to discuss your health status. If you or someone in your household is experiencing symptoms, call 811 and notify your case manager/service provider. You should remain at home and avoid public places. Any member of your household experiencing symptoms should remain out of the room during home care services.

6. I have been asked about a backup plan. What is this?

A backup plan is an alternative approach for your care. It is recommended you speak with both your case manager and family or other supports to determine how they can assist in providing care if a backup plan is required.

A backup plan should consider the following:

- Who can help care for me if I am sick or my home care provider is sick?
- How long can they provide care to me? – consider a period lasting from one week to several months.
- Can the frequency of care visits be reduced?

7. I am concerned about my home care caregivers being sick. What can I do to ensure my safety?

All of our caregivers are trained in Infection, Prevention and Control, including hand hygiene and wearing the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect themselves and others.

If you have concerns, you can ask them to leave. We request that you call your case manager if this situation occurs. If you want to cancel home care services, ensure your backup plan is initiated.

8. What if I have to cancel my home care visit due to illness?

The first step is to call your home care office or service provider as soon as possible if appointments need to be cancelled due to illness. All clients should have a backup plan in place to ensure they can still receive the care they require. If you are unable to access your back up plan, contact your home care office.

9. Will Home Care staff continue to provide care to me if I have flu like symptoms, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19?

Yes, prior to each visit your home care staff will ask you questions regarding symptoms that you may be experiencing. If you have any flu like or COVID-19 symptoms, home care staff will provide service but with enhanced PPE (gloves, mask, face shield/eye protection, and gown).

10. What does self-isolation mean?

- Self-isolation means avoiding situations where you can infect other people. This means all situations where you may come in contact with others, such as social gatherings, work, school, athletic events, faith-based gatherings, healthcare facilities, grocery stores, restaurants, shopping malls and all public gatherings.
- You should not (where possible) use public transportation including buses, taxis, or ride sharing.
- You should avoid having visitors to your home, but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food.
- You can also use delivery or pick up 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 or wash in a 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.
- During this time, it is important that you monitor your health for symptoms like fever or cough, and call HealthLink 811 if you have any concerns.

When to Self-Isolate	When to Quarantine
<p>Isolate to avoid spreading illness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You tested positive for COVID-19. • You are sick with fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat* or runny nose* and have not been tested. <p><i>*Children under 18 are exempt from mandatory isolation for runny nose or sore throat, but should stay home until well.</i></p> <p>https://www.alberta.ca/isolation.aspx</p>	<p>Quarantine and watch for symptoms to prevent exposing others before symptoms appear.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You had close contact with a person who has COVID-19. • You returned from travel outside of Canada.

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

Please visit the following websites if you have general questions about what COVID-19 is, how it is spread, or how many cases there are in the world at present. You can call HealthLink 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 Health Services](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[World Health Organization](#)