



# Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) FAQs

## What is coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19), formally known as 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), is a new virus that is causing mild-severe respiratory infections. At this time, most infections are among people who live in Hubei Province in China but people in other cities or countries have also become sick.

Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold. However, there have been two specific coronaviruses that have spread from animals to humans and which also have caused severe illness in humans:

- [The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus \(SARS CoV\)](#)
- [The Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus \(MERS CoV\)](#)

## Why did the name change from novel coronavirus (nCoV-2019) to coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?

The decision was based on guidelines agreed between World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organization for Animal Health and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation. [Learn More](#)

## Where can I find the most up-to-date information on this outbreak?

Many of the characteristics of COVID-19 are still unknown. For the most up-to-date information on the COVID-19 outbreak on the Public Health Agency of Canada's website here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

## Advice for residents and travellers to the NWT

The public health risk associated with COVID-19 is low for NWT residents at this time. The Chief Public Health Officer of the NWT does not recommend cancellation of public events, gatherings, or field/athletic trips.

- *Information for International Travellers or Returning Canadians who travel from **mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Japan and Italy***
  - If you have visited **any of these areas** in the last 14 days, the NWT Chief Public Health Officer advises that you self-monitor for signs and symptoms of illness. If you develop fever, cough, or shortness of breath stay away from others. Contact your [local Emergency Department or Health Centre](#) and advise them of your symptoms and recent travel so that you can be safely assessed.

- ***Information for International Travellers or Returning Canadians who travel from Iran or Hubei Province***
  - In collaboration with federal and provincial partners, the NWT Chief Public Health Officer advises that, if you visited **Iran or China's Hubei province** in the last 14 days you should isolate yourself until 14 days have passed since the end of that visit. This is precautionary and we advise self-isolation even if you are feeling well. If you have fever, cough, or shortness of breath stay away from others. Contact your [local Emergency Department or Health Centre](#) and advise them of your symptoms and recent travel so that you can be safely assessed. See below for more information on self-isolation.

### **What does self-isolation mean?**

Self-isolation means **limiting your contact with others** even if you are feeling well. While on self-isolation you must self-monitor for signs and symptoms of illness such as cough, fever or shortness of breath.

Limiting contact with others means:

- avoiding individuals with chronic illnesses, weakened immune systems, and senior citizens;
- avoiding having visitors;
- avoiding situations such as social gatherings, work, school, daycare, health care facilities, and seniors residences;
- limiting taking public transit, taxis and ride sharing;
- washing your hands often with soap and warm water frequently for at least 20 seconds; and
- If you become sick, it is important to call ahead to a health care provider and tell them your symptoms and travel history.

### **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Many cases are presenting with influenza like symptoms such as:

- Fever, or
- Cough.

Severe cases may have:

- Difficulty breathing, and/or
- Pneumonia.

Risk of severe disease may be higher for:

- Older people
- People with chronic disease (for example: diabetes, cancer, heart, renal, or chronic lung disease)
- Those with weakened immune systems

### **Is there a treatment for novel coronavirus?**

For now, there is no specific treatment for most people with COVID-19. Your health care provider may recommend steps you can take to relieve symptoms or provide other care.

### **How does it differ from the common cold or other respiratory illnesses?**

Although coronaviruses can have similar symptoms as the common cold, COVID-19 appears to present more like flu with fever or cough or difficulty breathing. Cold symptoms are usually milder than the symptoms of flu and people with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose. Here is a link to learn about the difference between cold or flu:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/cold-flu-know-difference-fact-sheet.html>

There are a number of respiratory infections currently circulating in the Northwest Territories, which can also produce similar symptoms, including:

- [Pertussis](#)
- [Influenza](#)
- [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\)](#), and
- [Common cold](#)

### **How can COVID-19 be spread?**

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets generated when you cough or sneeze,
- Close, prolonged personal contact,
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

## How can we reduce the spread of COVID-19?

We can reduce the spread of respiratory infections (this includes COVID-19), in our communities by practicing healthy respiratory practices. This means you and your family should:

1. **STAY HOME** if you are sick
  - Wear a mask if you must go out especially if you are in a waiting room or in places with large crowds.
  - If you need to see your healthcare provider ask for a mask when you get there
2. **Avoid close contact** with others if you are sick
3. **Turn and cover your nose/mouth** with a disposable tissue for every cough/sneeze
  - If a tissue is not available cough/sneeze into your elbow
4. **Throw used tissues in garbage**
  - If there is no garbage, carry a small plastic bag to put used tissues in and throw out later
5. **Wash your hands** for at least 20 seconds after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
  - Use alcohol-based sanitizer if no soap is immediately available
6. **Clean/Disinfect any surfaces or objects** you or someone else might have touched while sick

## What do you do if you become sick or think you may have been exposed to COVID-19 or another disease while traveling?

If you have been travelling and you are sick you should tell your [health care provider](#). You should also tell your health care provider if you become ill after contact with someone who has travelled (particularly if that person has been ill). If you seek health care, wear a mask or ask for one when you get there.

Let your healthcare provider know:

- Your symptoms and when they started;
- Where you have been travelling or living;
- If you became sick while travelling or have become sick since returning home;
- If you have been in close contact with someone who is sick and was travelling; and
- If you have been in direct contact with animals or fluids (ie. droppings, blood).

## What should you do to prepare?

The NWT has emergency plans in place to deal with infectious outbreaks, and officials are reviewing these specifically with COVID-19 in mind. However, although the risk of spread of this virus in the NWT remains low at this time, it is still good to plan ahead and be prepared.

Just like preparing for weather, ferry and ice road closures, you should have plan in place that includes keeping 2 weeks of household supplies such as food, water, cleaning supplies, and medication plus requirements for childcare or elder support.

For more information on what you can do, please see:

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Be prepared factsheet](#) (Government of Canada)

## What should you do if you have travel plans?

Stay up-to-date with the Government of Canada [travel alerts](#).

Take the appropriate preventative measures, such as:

- Washing your hands regularly;
- Avoid contact with animals (alive or dead);
- Avoid surfaces with animal droppings or secretions on them;
- Avoid contact with sick people, especially if they have fever, cough, or difficulty breathing; and
- Be aware of the local situation and follow local public health advice.

## What is the test for COVID-19?

The test for COVID-19 is the same sample collection test used for other respiratory viruses such as influenza. It is called a nasopharyngeal swab. The health care provider has the patient put their head back and inserts a flexible flocked swab into the back of the nose to collect the specimen. The tip of the swab is placed in a special liquid for transport and then sent to the laboratory for testing. Here is a picture of the collection kit:



### **Where is the test for COVID-19 done?**

In the NWT all respiratory viral swabs, including the ones collected for COVID-19, are sent to DynaLIFE in Edmonton, Alberta. DynaLIFE is the routine referral laboratory for the NWT. As per DynaLIFE procedure, viral swab specimens are then forwarded to Public Health Laboratories (formally ProvLab) in Edmonton, Alberta. Public Health Laboratories then follow their internal process for completing the test for COVID-19. The Public Health Laboratory follows federal guidance regarding the new coronavirus by submitting the specimen for confirmatory testing to the Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg.

### **How long does it take to get the results of a COVID-19 test?**

The Alberta Public Health Laboratory has informed us that they can usually provide the health care provider a presumptive or preliminary result within 4 days, and it will likely take an additional 3 days (7 days in total) to get the confirmatory result from the National Microbiology Laboratory.

### **What is the procedure if someone tests positive for COVID-19 in the NWT?**

NWT health care providers would follow direction of the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer if someone tests positive for COVID-19. This direction adopts the latest national public health management guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada. This information is found online:

- [Public health management of cases and contacts associated with novel coronavirus](#)

### **What is the Government of Canada/NWT doing to prevent the spread?**

The Government of Canada and the provinces and territories have multiple systems in place to identify, prevent and control the spread of serious infectious diseases into and within Canada.

These systems are on alert to ensure that Canada maintains continual preparedness for public health emergencies, taking precautions to prevent the introduction into and spread of communicable diseases in and out of Canada. These precautions include:

- Actively monitoring the situation with COVID-19, together with national and international groups, to be ready for identifying and caring for those who have COVID-19 and to prevent its spread;
- Routine infection and prevention control precautions in all Canadian hospitals;
- Routine traveller screening procedures at Canada's ports of entry; and
- Public health laboratory capacity that is well equipped to rapidly detect serious infectious diseases.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is continuing to collaborate with partners internationally. It is also sharing information and working with federal, provincial and

territorial partners and public health authorities to maintain Canada's preparedness to rapidly identify, treat and prevent the spread of this emerging disease should it present in Canada.

**Where can I get for more information?**

- [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) FAQs](#) (GNWT)
- [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\)](#) (Government of Canada)
- [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Updates](#) (World Health Organization)
- [Travel Advisories](#) (Government of Canada)