

# COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

## **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. The virus spreads through close person-to-person contact.

### **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: As with 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). 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

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from a few hours to several days. Therefore, isolation at home or hospital is important to prevent transmission.

It is recommended to maintain a social distance of ideally two metres and at minimum one metre.

## **Travel Guidance**

The Public Health Agency of Canada is recommending residents postpone or cancel all non-essential travel outside of Canada. All travellers are being asked to self-isolate for 14 days after returning to Canada as a precaution.

### **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](http://saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus) for more information. They should not have visitors to their home and should avoid contact with others that may be living in the same home.

### **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 stay home. Do 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 means watching closely for symptoms in yourself or your dependents including taking your temperature twice daily. You do not have restrictions on attending work or school but should avoid crowded public spaces and vulnerable people (those with weakened immune systems or individuals over 65 years of age). You should have

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a plan on how to quickly self-isolate if you develop fever, cough, or difficulty breathing when not at home.

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. However, if the person has had another exposure during the initial 14 day period (for example from a family member that became ill), the self-isolation must extend for 14 days from the last exposure.

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.

## **Protecting Yourself**

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

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

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](#).
- Avoid large crowds and practice social distancing (do not shake hands, hug or kiss)

**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, School or in Shared Accommodations**

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

A: All international travelers, including those returning from the U.S., need to self-isolate for 14 days after returning to Canada as a precaution. If you develop symptoms call your physician or HealthLine 811.

Health Care workers who have traveled internationally, truckers and airline crews are exempt, if they are required to work to maintain business continuity and will be supervised by Infection, Prevention Control Officers and Occupational Health and Safety.

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

A: If you are concerned that someone in your workplace has travelled recently, speak with your manager. All travelers are asked to follow the best public health advice from the [Public Health Agency of Canada](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/covid-19).

**Q: When would public health recommend a business close to prevent the transmission of COVID-19?**

A: With overall risk to Canadian low, business closure due to **COVID-19** is not recommended. All employees should use best practices to prevent transmission including washing their hands, practicing good cough and sneeze hygiene, and staying home when they are sick.

**Q: Are schools still open?**

A: On March 15, 2020, the Chief Medical Health Officer indicated that school closures would be based on a number of factors including:

- Evidence of sustained transmission within the community
- Rapid increase of local cases
- Transmission without a known link to travel or confirmed cases.

There continues to be no evidence that any of the above three criteria have been met.

However, as a preventative and proactive approach school closures will begin March 20, 2020 for pre-K to Grade 12 schools in Saskatchewan. Classes will be suspended indefinitely.

**Q: If schools are closed, does that mean daycares are closed?**

A: These measures apply to daycares that are co-located with schools, but do not apply to licensed daycare facilities outside of schools. Further measures regarding licensed daycare facilities are being considered and will be implemented at a later date.

**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 the in same fashion as influenza. Administrators, teachers, caregivers, parents and students should take the same precautions they do to prevent the spread of influenza.

Practice good cough/sneeze etiquette (into your elbow or tissue and immediately throw the tissue away), wash hands frequently and immediately after using tissues. Individuals who are sick should stay home.

Hard surfaces (toys, counters, door knobs) should be cleaned at least daily and when obviously soiled with an approved disinfecting solution such as household bleach (one part bleach to 10 parts water).

There is no special handling requirement for soiled laundry, such as blankets or towels.

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**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 distance them from other children until their parent or caregiver can come for them. This distance should ideally be two metres, but at a minimum one metre.

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.

It is 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 ideally two metres, but at a minimum one metre distance between themselves and other passengers for the best protection.

**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](https://www.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 age 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. Can I visit someone in a care home or in the hospital?**

A. Visitors to long-term care homes, hospitals, personal care homes and group homes are restricted to essential visitors only. Essential visitors means immediate family visiting during compassionate reasons.

## **Risk in Saskatchewan**

### **Q: Why is the overall risk to Canadians low?**

A: At this time, the Public Health Agency of Canada has assessed the public health risk associated with **COVID-19** as low for the general population, but this could change quickly. There is an increased risk of more severe outcomes for Canadians age 65 and older, those with compromised immune systems or underlying medical conditions.

Public health officials continue to reassess the national and provincial public health risk, based on the best available evidence as the situation evolves.

### **Q: Are there confirmed cases of the virus in Saskatchewan?**

A: Yes, there are confirmed cases in Saskatchewan.

Public health efforts are focusing on limiting the spread through education and contact tracing. **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 Federal Government and Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer recommend that any residents currently travelling internationally should return to Canada while commercial options are available. The federal government and Saskatchewan's Chief Medical Health Officer also recommend avoiding all non-essential international travel until further notice.

All travellers returning from international destinations, including the United States, need to self-isolate for 14 days upon return. Travellers returning from within Canada are advised to self-monitor for 14 days upon return.

### **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](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus). Updated information will be posted as it becomes available.

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