

# COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

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## Travel Guidance (updated March 11,2020)

The risk to Canadian travelers abroad will vary depending on the destination and there are some destinations where the Government of Canada recommends avoiding all travel or all non-essential travel.

**All travelers** should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough or difficulty breathing) for 14 days after returning to Canada and avoid places where you cannot easily separate yourself from others if you become ill. If you have even mild symptoms, stay home and call HealthLine 811 for advice.

If you have travelled to a country with a [level three travel advisory](#), limit your contact with others for a total of 14 days starting the day you began your journey to Canada. This means self-isolate and stay at home. Contact HealthLine 811 within 24 hours of arriving in Canada for direction.

### **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 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.

## 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. 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 metres. 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](#).
- 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 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: All travelers should self-monitor for symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough or difficulty breathing) for 14 days after returning to Canada and avoid places where you cannot easily separate yourself from others if you become ill. If you have even mild symptoms, stay home and call HealthLine 811 for advice.

If you have travelled to a country with a [level three travel advisory](#), limit your contact with others for a total of 14 days starting the day you began your journey to Canada.

This means self-isolate and stay at home. Contact HealthLine 811 within 24 hours of arriving in Canada for direction.

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](http://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: 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](#).

**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 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 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: 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 65 and over, 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: What happens if there is a confirmed case of the virus in Saskatchewan?**

A: We are anticipating that there will be confirmed cases in Saskatchewan and the public will be notified. Public health efforts will continue to focus 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 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. 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.