

COVID-19

INFORMATION
AND ADVICE

Personal Health and Safety

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a huge impact on all of our lives. Adapting to this new situation has taken, and will continue to take, a lot of hard work from all of us. Thank you for all you are doing to mitigate the risk of transmission and stay safe, while at the same time working hard towards our common goals.

It is not easy to stay up to date and navigate all of the news and information on COVID-19 that is being produced and disseminated. Official guidance and information are evolving as knowledge and understanding of COVID-19 grow. **Please follow all directives and advice from national government and local health authorities.**

This update is intended to share reliable information that CAWST has gathered, and answer some of the questions that we have been hearing from staff and clients.

Please share this information widely with your networks. This document is based on information provided by the World Health Organization, Alberta Health Services, Wash'Em, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other reputable sources. It is current as of today (April 14, 2020).

CAWST will continue to support client organizations and partners and disseminate useful resources and information as they become available. If you have questions or would like further information please contact us at support@kawst.org.

Coronaviruses

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses cause respiratory illness in people, ranging from mild common colds to severe life threatening illnesses.

Coronaviruses can cause disease outbreaks, including severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

COVID-19 is caused by a new strain of virus called SARS-CoV-2 that had not been previously identified in humans. This means people have no immunity against it, and it has no specific treatment or vaccine. The virus and disease may also be referred to as the "the novel coronavirus".

COVID-19 vs. Influenza (Flu)

In some ways, COVID-19 is similar to influenza or “the flu”, but there are also key differences.

Similarities

- Both cause respiratory disease
- Both are spread by small droplets from the nose and mouth
- Neither is spread through the air over long distances and times, unlike a disease such as the measles

Differences

- There is no specific vaccine or treatment available (yet!) for COVID-19
- The virus that causes COVID-19 does not appear to transmit as efficiently as influenza:
 - At this point, it appears that it is mainly people with symptoms who spread the disease. This means that when people who have symptoms are isolated, controlling spread is possible.
- COVID-19 presents severe symptoms and causes mortality in more cases than the flu. On average:
 - COVID-19 has resulted in 1 to 2 deaths in every 100 cases
 - Flu results in 1 death in every 1,000 cases

Because the coronavirus can cause serious illness, it is critical to keep it from spreading by having people with symptoms stay home and away from others.

Symptoms of COVID-19

COVID-19 symptoms are similar to influenza and other respiratory illnesses.

- Common symptoms can be mild: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat
- Other symptoms include: fatigue, aches, sudden loss of taste or smell, nausea and diarrhea
- Symptom of serious illness: difficulty breathing or pneumonia

Most people – about 80% – recover without needing special treatment or hospitalization. However, it can cause serious illness in some, and there is a risk of death in severe cases.

Serious illness appears to develop more often in people who are older than 65 or have pre-existing conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer, or diabetes.

Transmission of COVID-19

A person becomes infected when the virus that causes COVID-19 enters the body through the mouth, nose, or eyes.

- The virus is primarily transmitted between people through respiratory droplets and contact with

contaminated surfaces, objects, and hands.

- The virus does not spread through the air over long distances or times; however, aerosols (very fine droplets) are being studied as a possible route of transmission.
- **Survival of the virus on different surfaces is variable.**
 - Plastic about 72 hours
 - Stainless steel about 48 hours
 - Cardboard about 24 hours
- There is **evidence** that the virus can be present in feces. However, there are no reports of fecal-oral transmission of the COVID-19 virus to date.

Preventing transmission

We all have a responsibility to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Take steps to protect yourself and others:

- Practice physical distancing
- Practice good hygiene:
 - Handwashing
 - Respiratory hygiene
 - Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands
 - Wear a mask in public settings
- Disinfect high-touch surfaces
- Monitor for symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat
- Practice self-isolation if you have any symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or medical condition
- Inform your local health care provider if you develop symptoms

Practice physical distancing

Physical distancing involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with. It can help you reduce the risk of getting sick, and the risk of transmitting the disease. There is increasing evidence that transmission can happen before people develop any symptoms, practicing physical distancing can help limit this form of transmission.

Physical distancing is not the same as self-isolation or self-quarantine. To practice physical distancing, you do not need to remain indoors, but you do need to avoid close contact with people.

Everybody should practice physical distancing to help protect themselves and limit the spread of COVID-19.

To protect yourself and others:

- Keep at least 2 metres or 6 feet (the length of a bicycle) from others when going out for groceries, medical trips and other essential needs

- Limit the number of times you leave your home for errands
- Try to shop at less busy times
- Order online to have groceries or other items delivered, if possible
- Maintain distance from other people if you go for a walk in your neighbourhood
- Avoid overcrowding in public transport or other enclosed spaces
- Wash or sanitize your hands after touching communal surfaces

Practice good hygiene

Handwashing

Frequent handwashing is a key component in the fight against COVID-19.

Wash hands often with soap, for at least 20 seconds.

- Wet hands with warm water
- Apply soap
- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds (including your palms, back of each hand, between fingers, thumbs and under nails)
- Rinse well
- Dry hands well with a paper or cotton towel. Avoid sharing towels.

If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to clean your hands.

If safe water is not available for handwashing, untreated water can be used. This [can be effective](#) for reducing pathogens during handwashing. If there are no other options, water that has been used to wash or rinse clothes and dishes can be saved and used for washing hands with soap. See [Global Handwashing FAQs](#).

Encouraging handwashing

Encourage others to wash their hands frequently. We recommend reviewing content produced by Wash'Em. This initiative uses rapid formative research to design evidence-based and context-adapted handwashing behaviour change programmes in emergencies. It has been developed by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Action contre la Faim, and CAWST, and is funded by USAID.

The Wash'Em team is committed to helping local-level actors respond rapidly and effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic. To support hygiene behaviour change program design during the pandemic, Wash'Em has produced resources that are designed specifically for the COVID-19 context. Read the brief and watch the webinars for strategies to encourage people to wash their hands. They are working on getting the resources translated into more languages.

[WASH'Em resources](#)

Including a COVID-19 Guide and webinar recordings in English, French, Spanish, and Arabic.



Respiratory hygiene

- Cough or sneeze into your sleeve at the elbow
or
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue and put used tissue into the garbage
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing
 - Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds
or
 - Clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer

Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands

A person becomes infected when the virus that causes COVID-19 enters the body through the mouth, nose or eyes. Our hands are frequently in contact with potentially contaminated surfaces and can transfer the virus when we touch our faces.

Wash your hands before touching your face, mouth, eyes, or nose.

Wear a mask in public settings

When sick, wearing a mask helps prevent us from passing illnesses on to other people. This is why people who have a cough or respiratory symptoms should wear a mask and wash their hands when visiting a clinic, if visits are permitted.

Wearing a non-medical mask, such as a homemade cloth mask, has not been proven to protect the person wearing it. However, wearing a non-medical mask may be helpful in protecting others around you. This is because face coverings are another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces. Additionally, wearing a mask may stop you from touching your nose and mouth. However, if the mask does not fit well or is not comfortable it may encourage you to touch your face even more.

If you choose to wear a non-medical mask or face covering:

- Ensure your mask fits well and does not gape at the sides.
- Be aware that masks can become contaminated on the outside. Avoid moving or adjusting the mask. Assume the mask has been contaminated and take proper precautions.
- Critically, if you wear a mask, you must wash your hands before putting it on, as well as before and after taking it off.
- Cloth masks should only be worn for a short time. There is some evidence that they can trap virus particles after they become damp, which may increase risk for the person wearing the mask.
- If you wear non-medical masks, carry a bag with several clean masks in it, as well as a plastic bag that can be used to safely store used masks until they can be washed at home.
- It is critical that used masks be carefully handled to avoid spreading infection to others.
- Wash used non-medical masks thoroughly with soap and water and dry after washing.

Disinfect high-touch surfaces

The coronavirus is primarily transmitted between people through respiratory droplets and contact with contaminated surfaces, objects, and hands. The virus can survive for up to three days on some hard surfaces.

Surfaces, handles, door knobs, handrails, and electronics (such as mobile phones, keyboards, touch screens) should be cleaned and disinfected frequently to limit the spread of the virus.

Depending on the type of material, [the following](#) can be used to clean high-touch surfaces:

- Soap/detergent and water
- 0.1% chlorine solution
- >3% hydrogen peroxide solution
- >70% alcohol solution
- General household cleaners and disinfectants

Monitor for symptoms

Initial symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to influenza and other respiratory illnesses. They can be mild and may not be immediately obvious. Monitor your health, and take your temperature, if you are able. If you develop symptoms, avoid contact with others and inform your local health care provider.

- Common symptoms include: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat
- Other symptoms include: fatigue, aches, sudden loss of taste or smell, nausea and diarrhea.
- Symptoms of serious illness include: difficulty breathing or pneumonia

Practice self-isolation or self-quarantine

Isolation and quarantine are public health practices used to protect the public by preventing exposure to people who have or may have a contagious disease.

It can be confusing to understand the difference, because “isolation” and “quarantine” are often used interchangeably. These are the [definitions](#) from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

Isolation separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick.

Quarantine is a measure that separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease to see if they become sick. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease, but do not show symptoms.

Isolation and quarantine can be voluntary or mandatory. Mandatory isolation or quarantine is when a health authority or government issues an order requiring people to isolate or quarantine themselves for a period of time. Voluntary or Self-Isolation / Quarantine is when a person has not been ordered into quarantine but, out of caution, chooses to do so at home.

Please follow local health authorities guidance on quarantine and isolation. Some [general guidance](#) to self-quarantine and self-isolating is provided here.

If you are self-quarantining:

- Limit contact with others in the place of isolation, including children
- Stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom from others in your home, if possible
- Do not have visitors
- Do not leave your place of isolation unless it's to get medical attention
- Do not use public transportation (for example, buses, taxis)
- Do not go to school, work, or other public areas
- Do not go into the community, including the grocery store and pharmacy
- If you need groceries, medication or other essential items, arrange to have a family member, friend, neighbour, or anyone else who is not in self-isolation do this for you. Have items left at the door to minimize contact
- If you have to be in contact with others, practice physical distancing and keep at least 2 metres (6 feet) between yourself and the other person
- Watch for symptoms

If you are self-isolating:

- Avoid isolating in a place where there are vulnerable people, including people who have a medical condition, compromised immune systems, or older adults
- Leaving your property to go for a walk is not permitted. Some health authorities recommend you stay indoors. Other health authorities recommend staying in a private place like your yard or balcony if you go outside for fresh air.
- Limit contact with others in the place of isolation, including children
- Stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom from others in your home, if possible
- Do not share household items such as dishes, cups, towels, and pillows. Wash them thoroughly with soap and water, after use
- Do not have visitors
- Do not leave your place of isolation unless it's to get medical attention
- Do not use public transportation (for example, buses, taxis)
- Do not go to school, work, or other public areas
- Do not go into the community, including the grocery store and pharmacy
- If you need groceries, medication or other essential items, arrange to have a family member, friend, neighbour, or anyone else who is not in self-isolation do this for you. Have items left at the door to minimize contact
- If you have to be in contact with others, practice physical distancing and keep at least 2 metres (6 feet) between yourself and the other person

COVID-19 Resources & References

World Health Organization

Questions and Answers on the Coronavirus COVID-19

English:

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>

French:

<https://www.who.int/fr/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/q-a-coronaviruses>

Spanish:

<https://www.who.int/es/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/q-a-coronaviruses>

WHO fights COVID-19 misinformation with interactive chatbots

<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/who-and-rakuten-viber-fight-covid-19-misinformation-with-interactive-chatbot>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/who-health-alert-brings-covid-19-facts-to-billions-via-whatsapp>

Country & Technical Guidance - Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

English:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

French:

<https://www.who.int/fr/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

Spanish:

<https://www.who.int/es/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>

WHO Regional Pages

■ Africa

<https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus-covid-19>

■ Americas

<https://www.paho.org/en/topics/coronavirus-infections/coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

<https://www.paho.org/es/temas/coronavirus/enfermedad-por-coronavirus-covid-19>

■ SE Asia

<https://www.who.int/southeastasia/outbreaks-and-emergencies/novel-coronavirus-2019>

■ Western Pacific

<https://www.who.int/westernpacific/emergencies/covid-19>

Alberta Health Services - Canada

English:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>

French:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17039.aspx>

Spanish:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17040.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control - USA

COVID-19 Resources

English:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Spanish:

<https://espanol.cdc.gov/enes/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>



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