

SENIORS AND HOUSING

Please note: the information in this document is accurate as of the date at the bottom of the page. For the most up-to-date information, please go to alberta.ca and click on the COVID-19 link.

Protection from COVID-19

How do you protect yourself and others from COVID-19?

- Practice physical distancing.
- Stay home and away from others if sick or in isolation.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid travel outside Canada.
- Watch for COVID-19 symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat.

Practice physical distancing

What is 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.
- This is not the same as isolation. You do not need to remain indoors, but you do need to avoid being in close contact with people.
- We are asking all Albertans to practise physical distancing to help protect themselves and limit the spread of COVID-19.

How do you practice physical distancing?

- Keep at least six 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 limit grocery store visits to once a week
- Try to have only one person in the household do the shopping
- Try to shop at less busy times
- Order online to have groceries or other items delivered if possible

- Go for a walk in your neighbourhood or park while maintaining distance from others
- Avoid overcrowding in elevators or other enclosed spaces
- Follow Alberta's mandatory restrictions on gatherings
- Wash or sanitize your hands after touching communal surfaces

Gathering and business restrictions

What are the prohibitions about gatherings?

- No gathering of more than 15 people is allowed in one indoor or outdoor location.
- Examples of indoor and outdoor gatherings include the following:
 - weddings
 - funerals
 - religious services
 - informal events
 - conferences
 - educational seminars and workshops
 - group volunteering initiatives
- All individuals found to be in violation of gathering restrictions are subject to a \$1,000 penalty.

Places of worship

Can I continue going to my place of worship?

- In light of the extraordinary circumstances, restrictions have been issued on mass gatherings to limit the potential spread of COVID-19, this includes faith-based gatherings.
- No gatherings with more than 15 people are allowed.
- Places of worship are encouraged to offer virtual or live-streamed activities instead of in-person events.
- If gatherings with fewer than 15 people do happen, there must be proper mitigation measures in place.
- More information can be found in the [guidance document for faith-based organizations](#).

Isolation

Why should an individual isolate?

- Isolation means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. It is a good way to help prevent the spread of infections like COVID-19.
- When you are exposed to an illness, there is a time between the exposure and when you start to feel sick. This incubation period is usually 2 to 10 days for COVID-19, but can be up to 14 days. Not everyone who is exposed will get sick, but it is necessary to wait the full 2 weeks to be sure you are not infected.
- There is a very small chance you can spread the germs before you feel sick, as many people have very mild symptoms at the start of their sickness. Staying home means

that if you do start to feel sick, it won't happen while you are in a public place, which lowers the chance the virus could spread to others.

Who should isolate?

Albertans with symptoms

- You are legally required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days if you have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose, or sore throat that is not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition.
- The mandatory isolation period is 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.

Tested positive for COVID-19

- You are legally required to isolate for a minimum of 10 days if you have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Isolation period is for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.

Have symptoms but tested negative for COVID-19

- If you tested negative and have known exposure to COVID-19, you are legally required to isolate for 14 days.
- If you tested negative and have no known exposure to the virus, you are not legally required to isolate. However, it is important to stay home until your symptoms resolve so that you do not infect others.

Close contacts of confirmed cases

- You are legally required to isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms if you are a close contact of a person who tested positive for COVID-19 (provides care, lives with or has close physical contact without appropriate use of personal protective equipment, or comes into direct contact with infectious body fluids)
- If you become sick with cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat during this time, you must isolate for an additional 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or until you are feeling well, whichever takes longer.

Travellers

- You are legally required to isolate for 14 days if you returned from travel outside of Canada after March 12 and monitor for symptoms.
- If you become sick with cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat during this time, you must isolate for an additional 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or until you are feeling well, whichever takes longer.

How do you isolate?

- Stay home – do not leave your home or attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings.
- Avoid close contact with people in your household, especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems.
- You are prohibited from taking public transportation like buses, taxis or ride-sharing.
- Do not go outside for a walk through your neighbourhood or park. This includes children in mandatory isolation.
- You can get fresh air in your backyard, if you have one, but you must remain on private property not accessible by others.
- If you live in an apartment building or highrise, you must stay inside and cannot use the elevators or stairwells to go outside. If your balcony is private and at least 2 metres away from your closest neighbour's, you may go outside on the balcony.

Seniors social isolation

What can Albertans do to help seniors who may be struggling with social isolation or feelings of loneliness?

- One of the most meaningful actions Albertans can take is simply picking up the phone.
- Even spending just a few minutes on the phone, or other technology, with a senior is a small action that can have a big impact.
- It can go a long way toward reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- This is especially important for seniors who are living alone.
- Regular phone calls with our elder loved ones can become part of our “new normal”.

What can seniors do to protect their personal health and wellbeing?

- During this difficult time, seniors can protect their mental health and feel more connected by taking the following steps:
 - Call a friend or family member
 - Exercise in their home
 - Go for a walk, while remembering to practice social distancing
 - Get fresh air by opening a window or going outside for a few minutes each day

Where can seniors find support in the community?

- If you need to find support in your community, reach out to 211 or Alberta Supports.
- 211 is a comprehensive informational referral system accessible for all Albertans. Call or text 2-1-1 or visit ab.211.ca.
- Alberta Supports can help you access more than 30 programs and 120 services available through the Government of Alberta. Call 1-877-644-9992 toll-free provincewide.

- Senior-serving organizations making changes to existing programs or services (i.e., changing services hours, offering delivery) should email database@ab.211.ca so the 211 database can be kept up to date.

What if you do not have COVID-19 symptoms and you need medical assistance for another reason, but cannot get treatment (medicentres are closed/doctors are turning patients away/I can't get through to Health Link). What should you do?

- We understand the strain that COVID-19 is causing on many Albertans. If your family physician or other health-care provider is unable or unwilling to receive you, we recommend you contact another health-care provider.
- To find a family doctor near you who is accepting new patients, Primary Care Networks and the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta offer online tools. Visit <https://albertafindadoctor.ca/> and <https://search.cpsa.ca/physiciansearch>
- **We recommend the postponement of any non-essential visits at this time.**
- You may also download the Babylon by Telus Health App to meet with Alberta-licensed physicians through your smartphone.

Can I visit my loved one in long-term care, supportive living, congregate living, hospice care or acute care?

- As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, AHS is taking additional steps to ensure that those most at risk of contracting the virus are protected.
- No visitors are permitted to long-term care, supportive living, congregate living, hospice care and acute care facilities in Alberta.
- Exceptions will be made for maternity care and children who are patients in acute care/outpatient settings, and for visitors attending to a resident who is dying in a continuing care facility.
- Visitors who are permitted under these exceptions must be verified and undergo a health screening prior to entering the facility. They are also required to wear a mask during their visit.
- Families and friends of those in these facilities to think of other ways besides visiting that they can support and encourage their loved ones through this difficult time.
- For more information, visit <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17001.aspx>.

Can I take my loved one out of a continuing care facility and bring them home if they have tested negative for COVID-19?

- Decisions to relocate a resident from a facility must be made in conjunction with their care team and physician.
- Families will need to be prepared to provide care for the resident (which may include additional home supports) and be responsible for their care until the facility can safely re-admit them.
- We encourage you to speak with your loved one's care team and physician to make an informed decision.

Seniors and fraud

What can be done to protect seniors from scam artists trying to take advantage of the pandemic?

- In emergencies like this, vulnerable individuals, especially seniors, are often targeted by unscrupulous con artists trying taking advantage of people's fear and uncertainty.
- They can pose as door-to-door salespeople, telemarketers, collection agents and sometimes even distant relatives asking for help.
- If you have a parent, grandparent, vulnerable family friend or neighbour, you are encouraged to watch out for them. Offer to be their buddy, someone they can check in with before responding to matters involving money.
- Be that calm, informed person who can advise them about when a caller or salesperson is legitimate or a scammer.
- Albertans are urged to practice social distancing, but continue to look out for one another.

Temporary closure of seniors information services office

What is happening to the Seniors Information Services Office?

- Effective immediately, the Seniors Information Services Office, located on Jasper Avenue in Edmonton, will be closed.

Why did the government close this storefront location?

- To protect the health of staff and clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, our government has decided to close the office.

What is the Seniors Information Services Office?

- The Edmonton Seniors Information Services Office provides in-person service to clients in need of information and support to access provincial seniors financial assistance programs.
- This storefront setup is unique to Edmonton. Seniors in all other areas of the province access information in-person through the Alberta Supports Contact Centres or via the Alberta Supports phone line.

How much traffic does the office typically receive?

- On average, the office supports around 39 clients a day.
- This number has decreased since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis.

Where should seniors go for information and supports now that the office is closed?

- Seniors can contact Alberta Supports at 1-877-644-9992.

When will the office reopen?

- We have closed the Seniors Information Services Office until further notice.

Where can seniors go for trustworthy information about COVID-19?

- alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans
- [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\) COVID-19 updates](#)
- [Government of Canada COVID-19 updates](#)
- World Health Organization COVID-19 updates

Are there resources available to caregivers?

- Caregivers can get supports in the form of referrals and a listening ear by calling Caregivers Alberta's Caregiver Advisor line at 780-453-5088 or 1-877-453-5088.