

COVID-19 Information

How COVID-19 spreads

COVID-19 spreads from an infected person to others through respiratory droplets and aerosols created when an infected person coughs, sneezes, sings, shouts, or talks. The droplets vary in size from large droplets that fall to the ground rapidly (within seconds or minutes) near the infected person to smaller droplets, sometimes called aerosols, which linger in the air under some circumstances. The relative infectiousness of droplets of different sizes is not clear. Infectious droplets or aerosols may come into direct contact with the mucous membranes of another person's nose, mouth or eyes, or they may be inhaled into their nose, mouth, airways and lungs. The virus may also spread when a person touches another person (i.e., a handshake) or a surface or an object that has the virus on it, and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.

Difference between quarantine and isolate

People are asked to quarantine or isolate to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 to others. Although these two words are often thought to mean the same thing, there's an important difference.

Quarantine

If you have no symptoms and any of the following apply to you, you must quarantine for 14 days (starting from the date you arrive in Canada):

- you're returning from travel outside of Canada (mandatory quarantine)
- you're travelling to a [province or territory](#) that's enforcing 14-day quarantine for all inter-provincial travellers
- you had close contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19
- you've been told by the public health authority that you may have been exposed to COVID-19 and need to quarantine isolate

You must **isolate** if any of the following apply:

- you've been diagnosed with COVID-19, or are waiting to hear the results of a lab test for COVID-19
- you have symptoms of COVID-19, even if mild, and you've been:
- in contact with someone who has or is suspected to have COVID-19
- told by public health that you may have been exposed to COVID-19
- you've returned from travel outside Canada with symptoms of COVID-19 (mandatory)

Preventing COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to protect you and those around you from serious illnesses like COVID-19. Vaccines work with your immune system so your body will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 and make your symptoms milder if you do get it. Safe and reliable vaccines can help protect you and your family from COVID-19. They will be an important tool to help stop the spread of the virus and allow individuals, families and workers to safely resume a normal life. The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine does not cause a coronavirus infection. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you.

After independent and thorough scientific reviews for safety, efficacy and quality, Health Canada has approved two vaccines for use in Canada:

- Pfizer-BioNTech– approved on December 9, 2020
- Moderna– approved on December 23, 2020

Both vaccines are manufactured in Belgium. After two doses, they are expected to be 94-95% effective.

Flu vaccine

Getting your [annual flu shot](#) is the best way to protect yourself, your family and people at high risk of complications from the flu. It will help:

- protect your community
- reduce the burden on Canada's health care system during the pandemic

The flu shot will not protect against COVID-19, but it will help reduce your risk of getting the flu and COVID-19 at the same time. Having both illnesses at the same time could put you at a higher risk for severe complications. Getting the flu shot will not increase your risk of illness from COVID-19.

Follow public health measures

Canadians should continue to think ahead about the actions that they can take to stay healthy and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Canada. Measures to [reduce COVID-19 in your community](#) are especially important as some areas begin to lift restrictions.

In an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within communities and across the country, all Canadians are advised to avoid or keep exposure very brief.

- Avoid closed spaces, crowded places, close contact settings and close-range conversation or settings where there's:
 - singing
 - shouting
 - heavy breathing (for example, during exercise)
- Wear a non-medical mask or face covering when you're in:
 - public and you might come into close contact with others
 - shared indoor spaces with people from outside your immediate household
- Stay home and away from others if you feel sick.

- Keep the number of people you have prolonged contact with as small as possible.
- Stick to a small and consistent social circle and avoid gathering in large groups.
- Talk to your employer about working at home if possible.
- Limit contact with those at risk of more severe illness, such as:
 - older adults
 - those with underlying medical conditions
 - those with compromised immune systems
- Go outside to exercise.
- Maintain a physical distance of 2 meters from people outside of your household.
- Household contacts (people you live with) don't need to distance themselves from each other unless they're sick or have travelled in the last 14 days.

Risks of getting COVID-19

The risk of getting COVID-19 is evolving daily and varies between and within communities. Overall, the risk to Canadians remains high. This doesn't mean that all Canadians will get the disease. It means that there's already a significant impact on our health care system.

To stay healthy and to protect ourselves and others, we must be mindful of the ever-present risk of exposure to the virus. Some settings and situations increase the risk, such as being in:

- closed spaces
- crowded places
- close-contact settings where you can't keep 2 metres apart from each other
- close-range conversations
- settings where there's singing, shouting or heavy breathing (for example, during exercise)

It's particularly important to avoid settings where these risks overlap, such as closed spaces and crowded spaces where close-range conversations occur.

False and misleading claims

Health Canada is closely tracking all potential drugs and vaccines in development in Canada and abroad. We are working with companies, academic research centres and investigators to help expedite the development and availability of treatments to prevent and treat COVID-19. Selling unauthorized health products or making false or misleading claims to prevent, treat or cure COVID-19 is illegal in Canada. We take this matter very seriously and we're taking action to stop this activity. We encourage anyone who has information regarding the potential non-compliant sale or advertising of any health product claiming to treat, prevent or cure COVID-19.