



INFOCAPSULE UPDATED PERIODICALLY

Novel coronavirus discovered in 2019 in Wuhan, China (COVID-19)

Issue statement: On December 31, 2019, the municipal health authorities in Wuhan, Hubei Province, located in central China, published a statement regarding an outbreak of pneumonia from an unknown cause. China discovered that a novel coronavirus (coronavirus disease called COVID-19) was responsible for the pneumonia cases in the Wuhan outbreak.

For the most recent information regarding COVID-19, including the latest number of confirmed cases, consult <https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus>.

This InfoCapsule was prepared for senior officials and media relations to answer requests for information.

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Key messages regarding COVID-19

- Our top priority is the health and safety of the Canadian population.
- On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic.
- The WHO's assessment was not unexpected.
- In Canada, our health system is ready for this type of situation.
- Canada has several systems that are already in place to prepare for the novel coronavirus, detect it, respond to it and prevent it from spreading. Here are just a few of them.
 - The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has set up the Health Portfolio Operations Centre (HPOC) to ensure efficient planning and coordination of the Agency's response efforts, in collaboration with its international, federal, provincial, and territorial partners.
 - Public Safety Canada has set up the Government of Canada's Operations Centre to coordinate activities among federal ministries and organizations.
 - The PHAC, through the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, is in close contact with the provincial and territorial Chief Medical Officers of Health to share information, coordinate response efforts and support informed vigilance as the situation evolves.
 - A Special Advisory Committee of Canada's Chief Medical Officers of Health and senior public health officials has been set up to focus on the coordination of federal, provincial, and territorial preparedness and response across Canada's health systems.
- Routine traveller screening procedures are in place at all of Canada's points of entry, and additional border screening measures were implemented in all international airports to help identify any travellers returning to Canada who may be ill, and to inform travellers about what they should do if they become ill.
- The Government of Canada remains in a constant state of readiness for public health emergencies, by taking precautions to mitigate the risk of introducing and spreading communicable illnesses within the country. These precautions include, among others:
 - a complete monitoring infrastructure to rapidly detect emerging phenomena and infectious illnesses, particularly respiratory illnesses;
 - routine precautions for prevention and control of infection in all Canadian hospitals;
 - well-equipped public health laboratories that can quickly detect serious infectious diseases.



- This is a critical period, and efforts are being made worldwide to control the outbreak and prevent it from spreading further.
- Everyone must do their part to flatten the epidemic curve. We must modify our behaviours, particularly by adopting personal health measures such as frequent hand washing and covering our mouth when coughing, in addition to practising physical distancing.
- The situation is constantly evolving, and we will keep the Canadian population informed of any new information.
- For the latest information, please consult <https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus> or call the new toll-free number (1-833-784-4397) for answers to your novel coronavirus 2019 questions.

Risks for the Canadian population

- COVID-19 is a serious threat to health, and the situation is evolving daily.
- The risk varies within each community and from one community to another, but because of the increasing number of cases in Canada, the risk to Canadians is considered **high**.
- That does not mean that all Canadians will become ill.
- It does mean, however, that there are already significant repercussions on the health care system, which could impact the health care resources available for Canadians, whether or not they have been diagnosed with COVID-19, if we don't flatten the epidemic curve immediately.
- The risk of serious illness and associated consequences is higher for the elderly and for those of all ages with pre-existing medical conditions.
- That is why we advise all Canadians to stay home as much as possible. If you must leave home, practise physical distancing.
- Public health authorities across Canada are working extremely hard to slow the spread of COVID-19 within our communities and to reduce the consequences.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada, in collaboration with provincial, territorial, and local partners, is constantly re-evaluating the risks to public health, based on the best evidence, as the situation evolves.



Basics for living with COVID-19

- We know that the coronavirus is going to continue to spread within our communities when activities gradually start back up. That is why we must go slowly and cautiously as the pandemic progresses, at least until a vaccine becomes available.
- Most people who get COVID-19 have mild symptoms. During the reopening period, we will do everything possible to protect the people who are most likely to be seriously affected by the illness. Our objective is to minimize the overall number of cases and deaths, whether or not they are associated with COVID-19. To this end, all Canadians can take key steps.
- Continue to follow essential measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus, namely physical distancing, frequent hand washing and isolation at home if you are sick.
- If you think you are sick with coronavirus, take a screening test. This will help us identify any community outbreaks and implement measures to prevent the virus from spreading.
- We hope that the reopening of services for all health issues, as well as the resumption of certain social and economic activities, will lighten the overall burden of illnesses in our communities, whether or not they are caused by the coronavirus.
- Those with chronic illnesses, people over 60 years of age and those who have a higher risk of infection must remain highly vigilant. We must support the most vulnerable Canadians so that they can stay home as much as possible, avoid situations where contact with those from outside their homes is probable, and avoid places where adequate physical distancing is not possible.
- Never forget that we are all vectors of the coronavirus, even if we have no symptoms. It is therefore essential to maintain the basic infection prevention measures and to ensure that anyone who has symptoms goes immediately to a screening centre.
- Even if your symptoms are mild, stay home until you are better instead of going to work or going out in public. To this end, employers and employees must support each other so that we can monitor the transmission rate and keep the virus under control. Don't forget that according to scientific data, it is possible to transmit the coronavirus before and during the onset of symptoms, but also in the absence of symptoms.
- We know that many Canadians want to hold important ceremonies, such as funerals or other important rites. It is crucial to comply with local directives regarding the number of participants, infection prevention measures and related activities.



Keeping Canadians informed

COVID-19 Situational Awareness Dashboard

- On April 4, 2020, the Government of Canada launched a new COVID-19 Situational Awareness Dashboard for Canada.
- In Canada, the situation is progressing quickly, and our knowledge of COVID-19 is evolving each day. The Canadian population needs easy access to online resources to find answers to their questions regarding COVID-19.
- Canadian citizens and researchers will find the latest COVID-19 data, presented online in a user-friendly dashboard, helping them better understand the evolution of the epidemic in Canada.
- The Situational Awareness Dashboard gives an interactive overview of the number of cases and deaths in Canada, with details on the hardest-hit populations by age and gender, and on the epidemic's evolution over time.
- This tool does not display any modelling or forecasts of what could happen in the coming days and months.
- Each day, new information is published by the provinces and territories. Even if the dashboard is continuously updated to include the latest information, there could be differences between the nationwide number of cases and the numbers within the territories and provinces. The data from the provinces and territories must be considered to be the most up to date.
- The Government of Canada will continue to collaborate with its partners from all levels of government to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically to quickly detect and manage infections to protect the health of Canadians.

Virtual Health Tools

- More than ever, Canadians need tools and resources to promote their health and well-being, including easily accessible information, mental health support, alerts, and screening tools.
- The announcement on May 3 of \$240.5 million will help provide Canadians with virtual tools and modes of access to credible information regarding health and the health services they need.
- These virtual tools enable Canadians to contact their usual health care providers securely by phone, text messaging or videoconferencing. They also enable patients to have continued access to specialists during this period of uncertainty.



- Improvement in virtual tool access will also help Canadians get reliable information, in particular thanks to the Canada COVID-19 mobile application; they will be better equipped to understand and monitor their symptoms and learn more about ways to protect themselves during the pandemic.
- We recognize that Canadians are confronted with the effects of COVID-19 and varying levels of stress. This investment will support Wellness Together Canada, a new free, online portal offering support services for mental health, well-being and addiction.
- The Government of Canada is working closely with the provinces and territories, innovators, and other partners to support the rapid expansion of virtual health services and to make these tools widely accessible to Canadians and their families.
- The expansion of virtual care and the implementation of digital solutions for Canadians will contribute to alleviating pressure on health systems and providing health services and reliable information that Canadians need, in a safe and secure manner.
- Our government recognizes that this is an unprecedented period. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories, innovators, and other partners to take action and support Canadians.
- Enabling Canadians to have safe, virtual access to the credible information and health services they need is at the heart of the government's work to ensure that Canadians remain safe and informed.

The Canada COVID-19 application

- Canadians need easy access to digital tools and resources to obtain the COVID-19 information they need.
- The Canada COVID-19 mobile application offers users access to reliable sources of health information and daily tracking of any COVID-19 symptoms they may have.
- It enables Canadians to view the latest COVID-19 updates and Canada's response to the pandemic in real time, as well as customized recommendations and resources.
- This application builds on tools developed by the provinces and territories and is another valuable resource for Canadians.
- Health Canada continues to work closely with the provinces and territories, providers, and stakeholders to make additional tools available to Canadians and their families.
- The Canada COVID-19 application is a central resource for accessing reliable, evidence-based information about the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada. It does not contain any personal information and is not used for surveillance.



- Protecting the information of Canadians is a priority for the Government of Canada. If a tool were to be used to collect health care information, it would have to undergo a rigorous privacy impact assessment.

Federal funding for the response to COVID-19

- On March 11, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced more than \$1 billion for the creation of a whole-of-government COVID-19 Response Fund.
- The funding provided to the PHAC and Health Canada includes:
 - \$50 million for the Public Health Agency of Canada to support ongoing communications to keep Canadians informed and a national public education campaign to encourage the adoption of self-protective behaviours.
 - \$100 million to support federal public health measures such as enhanced monitoring, increased testing at the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML), and continued support in implementing preparedness measures in First Nations and Inuit communities.
 - This amount is in addition to the \$50 million initially provided to support the immediate public health response.
 - \$275 million to strengthen our capacity to conduct antiviral drug research, develop vaccines and support clinical trials.
 - This amount is in addition to the \$27 million for coronavirus research announced at the beginning of March through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which will support 47 research teams across Canada.
 - \$50 million to the Public Health Agency of Canada to support the purchase of personal protective equipment—such as surgical masks, face shields and hospital gowns—and medical supplies to meet federal needs and to supplement provincial and territorial stockpiles as required.

COVID-19 research by the Government of Canada

- Our top priority is the health and safety of the Canadian population.
- Canada is home to some of the world's most qualified and eminent researchers, who are working hard to support the international response to the current pandemic.
- Every day, we are learning more about COVID-19 by keeping abreast of new scientific data, released at a rapid pace.
- To slow and ultimately stop the spread of COVID-19, we need to mobilize Canada's science and research community to advance research and technology development.
- Therefore, the Government of Canada announced, in March 2020, the creation of a \$1 billion whole-of-government COVID-19 Response Fund, of which \$275 million will be



used to improve our capacity to test antivirals, develop vaccines and finance clinical trials.

- Through the Rapid Research Response Program of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Government of Canada has invested a total of \$54.2 million to support 99 teams of researchers across the country. These teams are working to develop and implement measures to rapidly detect, control and reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Their activities include vaccine research and the development of strategies to fight against stigma, misinformation, and fear.
- In addition to CIHR funding for Rapid Research Response, additional funding comes from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Canada Research Coordinating Committee, International Development Research Centre, and Genome Canada. Research Manitoba, Research Nova Scotia and Alberta Innovates have also contributed.
- The report released today showcases critical and innovative research being conducted across Canada, including solutions and tools being developed to combat and treat COVID-19.
- It is about building on the capacity and expertise of Government of Canada research institutions and making strategic investments to support and enhance the research capabilities of Canadian academia and industry.
- Many of the funded projects involve collaborations and partnerships with academia, ministries, and industry in other countries.
- We are working together to turn important research findings and results into measures that will save lives across the country.

Examples of projects

- The Government of Canada is investing \$150 million to support federal public health measures such as increased monitoring, increased testing by the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), and ongoing support for preparedness in First Nations and Inuit communities.
- This important work will underpin the delivery of diagnostic tests across Canada, as well as research, testing and the implementation of new diagnostic tests and methods. It will also support the coordination of the procurement and distribution of reagents and laboratory supplies with provincial and territorial authorities to increase testing capacity across the country.
- The PHAC's NML is improving its understanding of the epidemiology of COVID-19 across Canada, which will allow us to improve our response. This important work includes the evaluation of blood tests to determine the immune status of Canadian populations and the development of methods to perform these tests, as well as modelling work to evaluate various projections that will guide actions to minimize the incidence of the virus.
- The National Research Council (NRC) Pandemic Response Challenge Program will bring together Canada's top researchers from government, academia, and the private sector to develop medical countermeasures to combat COVID-19.



Program members will collaborate with Canadian health experts to identify the most pressing needs. They will target tools to diagnose and rapidly detect the virus, drugs, and vaccines to treat and prevent disease, and digital health solutions to help manage Canada's response to the pandemic.

Collaboration for the development of a vaccine

- Currently, there is no vaccine that protects against COVID-19. Research to support the development of COVID-19 vaccines is being conducted around the world, including in Canada, and is at various stages of completion.
- We are taking action to ensure that Canadians have access to a vaccine or drug to prevent or treat COVID-19 once it becomes available.
- These measures include investments in the following organizations.
 - Medicago (Quebec City): for pre-clinical and clinical trials of a plant-based virus-like particle (VLP) vaccine, including the expansion of manufacturing capacity.
 - Infectious Disease Organization – International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac) at the University of Saskatchewan: to build on VIDO-InterVac's existing expertise in coronavirus research and to upgrade its manufacturing facilities to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) standards; in support of these efforts, the NML and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) are collaborating with VIDO-InterVac at the University of Saskatchewan and the NRC to develop and test vaccine candidates.
 - National Research Council of Canada (NRC): to improve the facilities at the Human Health Therapeutics Research Centre in Montreal to bring them up to GMP standards. Starting in late spring 2020, these facilities will be able to manufacture batches of vaccines for clinical trials as soon as there are vaccine candidates.
- Health Canada is also working with vaccine developers and manufacturers to accelerate the evaluation of vaccines to prevent COVID-19. This includes supporting clinical trials and preparing for expedited reviews once they are developed.
- The Government of Canada will continue to work with international health product regulators, including the European Medicines Agency, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, its partners in Australia, Canada, Singapore and Switzerland, and other organizations such as the International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities and the World Health Organization (WHO), to support and coordinate rapid regulatory action on potential vaccines and other medical countermeasures.
- The NRC is also collaborating with several companies in the development of vaccine candidates.



- Canada is participating in the “**SOLIDARITY**” multinational trial, coordinated by the WHO, which is testing several potential drugs to fight COVID-19. Patient recruitment has already begun for the Canadian portion of the trial, which is expected to take place at up to 20 sites across Canada.
- This unprecedented mega-trial of potential treatments for COVID-19 is truly a new model of global collaboration, with the goal of quickly finding treatments that could reduce the number of COVID-19 victims.

Working with industry to advance research and bring innovative products to market

- The Government of Canada, through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and the National Research Council of Canada, is also working with industry to support research and manufacturing capabilities.
- This includes funding for the development of patient monitoring systems and home diagnostic kits.
- The Government of Canada is also providing funding to help Canadian small and medium-sized enterprises increase their capacity to innovate and bring their ideas to market, in particular for the manufacture of personal protective equipment and sanitation products.

Collaboration with the international research community

- The Government of Canada is contributing to the global research effort to address COVID-19. It works with its international partners, including the WHO, through its collaborating centres and its research and development blueprint, to coordinate efforts and share data and research results in an effort to jointly enrich knowledge worldwide.
- An example is the collaboration between the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) and the PHAC to establish the Biosafety Level 4 Zoonotic Diseases Laboratory Network (BSL4ZNet).
- This network consists of 15 government agencies from five different countries (Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia), all responsible for regulating human, animal, and zoonotic pathogens that could lead to a pandemic.
- BSL4ZNet has been holding emergency meetings on COVID-19 since early January with its international partners to facilitate the exchange of scientific information and communication of research capacity needs to scale up global efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19.



- The PHAC and DRDC, in partnership with the Department of National Defence, are also members of the Medical Countermeasures Consortium through which they work with the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia to foster collaborative research, development and acquisition.
- The CMA, NRC, PHAC and CFIA regularly consult with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), one of the major international funding mechanisms for vaccine development. Canada has contributed \$54 million to CEPI, which is leading efforts to develop candidate vaccines against COVID-19 for clinical trials to take place by late spring 2020.
- CIHR's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is guided by input from international partners such as the WHO and the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (Glo-PID-R).
- CIHR, in association with the PHAC, is building on the existing Canadian Immunization Research Network (CIRN) to address the COVID-19 pandemic. CIRN has received a direct grant of \$1 million to collect data on COVID-19 symptoms, treatment options and risk factors to inform Canada's public health response to this disease.
- Health Canada, as a member of the International Pharmaceutical Regulators Programme, is working with other international regulators to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the global supply.

Mental Health Support for Canadians

Wellness Canada

- Canadians need easy access to digital tools and resources to get the information they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In these challenging times, it is essential that Canadians have access to effective tools to support their mental health and well-being, obtain credible and reliable information about mental health and substance use, and access services.
- That is why the Government of Canada launched Wellness Canada, a portal to support mental health and substance use. It is a central resource to access confidential mental health and substance use support during this time of COVID-19.
- Health Canada is pleased to have worked with a wide range of organizations that have a long history of providing high-quality mental health and substance use care to Canadians: Stepped Care Solutions, Kids Help Phone, Homewood Health, Greenspace Health, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, and the Canadian Psychological Association.



- This Web portal provides Canadians with a virtual network of psychosocial information and support services, and is available at Canada.ca/coronavirus-disease and in the [Canada COVID-19 application](#).
- The Wellness Canada Mental Health and Substance Use Support Portal was designed to support services already offered by the provinces and territories.
- Health Canada is working closely with the provinces and territories, providers, and stakeholders to ensure that Canadians and their families have seamless access to additional tools.

Funding to Kids Help Phone in response to increased demand for child and youth mental health services related to COVID-19

- The COVID-19 pandemic is a new and unexpected phenomenon that is having a major impact on Canadians, including children and youth. Supporting the mental health and well-being of Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic is a priority for the Government of Canada.
- With schools closed and access to community resources reduced, Kids Help Phone is experiencing increased demand for confidential crisis support services that are available 24/7 online, by phone and text messaging.
- As a result, the Government of Canada is providing Kids Help Phone with \$7.5 million to help the organization meet the increased demand and provide children and youth with the emotional support they need during this difficult time.
- With this additional support, electronic mental health services will be available in English and French to children and youth across Canada who are experiencing the social and financial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This will ensure that vulnerable Canadian children and youth will find the help they need when they need it.
- This investment is an important first step in connecting Canadians across the country with the mental health resources they need.

Federal support to Nunavut

- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is moving quickly to allocate personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies among the provinces and territories, based on an approach approved by the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of health.
- In addition to N95 and equivalent masks (e.g., KN95), Nunavut has received shipments of surgical masks, gloves, and swabs for testing. Additional shipments of hand sanitizers and disinfectant wipes are in transit.



- The PHAC is sending PPE and respirators from the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) to provinces and territories requesting assistance. To date, the PHAC has responded to 38 requests from provinces and territories.
- On April 20, the National Microbiology Laboratory of the PHAC sent a Cepheid GeneXpert platform and four test kits (40 tests) to the Kivalliq Health Centre in Rankin Inlet, Nunavut, to meet point-of-care testing needs in the territory.
- On May 1, an additional 20 kits (200 tests) will be shipped to Nunavut to meet additional needs.
- The 24 test kits (240 tests) sent by the National Microbiology Laboratory to Nunavut are to supplement the community's supplies. Any questions regarding the total number of kits available in Nunavut should be directed to the territorial Department of Health.

If asked about when the test kits will arrive

- It took 5–10 business days for previous shipments to reach Nunavut. We are doing our best to expedite delivery.

If pressed on the amount of PPE requested by Nunavut and sent there

- The PHAC does not disclose the number of applications for assistance submitted by each province or territory or the amount of PPE received by each.
- As of April 29, 2020, the PHAC had responded to all requests for assistance from Nunavut.

If asked if Spartan Cube instruments have been sent to Nunavut

- Spartan Cube instruments received by the PHAC National Microbiology Laboratory are being clinically validated.
- The Spartan COVID-19 tests are not yet ready for distribution to the provinces and territories.

If pressed on the NESS

- Canada's National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) contains supplies that provinces and territories can request in emergencies, such as infectious disease outbreaks. Its purpose is to provide back-up resources to the provinces and territories.



If asked why there are only 40 tests in Nunavut, which is supposed to receive 200 more, and whether this number would be sufficient in the event of an outbreak in the community

- The National Microbiology Laboratory will continue to monitor and respond to the situation in Nunavut in collaboration with territorial authorities.
- Our priorities are still access to reagents for testing, evaluation of rapid tests that can be used at the point-of-care, and access to authorized test kits so that provinces and territories can increase the number of tests as needed.

Vaccination schedules during COVID-19

- Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
- While public health is a shared responsibility in Canada, issues related to immunization programs fall under provincial and territorial jurisdiction.
- Canadians should contact their health care provider or public health authorities to find out if there have been any changes to their recommended immunization schedule or that of their family members as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In the context of the current pandemic, it is normal to be concerned about attending routine medical and clinical appointments, in particular for vaccinations.
- Canadians should consult their health care provider or public health authorities for these reasons:
 - to find out if there have been any changes to their recommended vaccination schedule or that of their family members as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - to determine the timing of their visit;
 - to know what measures were put in place for the safe delivery of vaccination services during the crisis.
- Health care providers have taken precautions to prevent the spread of infection during consultations. These measures include:
 - screening patients for symptoms or other risk factors before the appointment and upon arrival;
 - posting signs in the office;
 - promoting the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer to patients;
 - providing masks to patients upon arrival;
 - staggering appointments, which promotes physical distancing in the office.



Infection prevention and control for acute care facilities

- Ensuring the protection of Canada's health care workers from COVID-19 is essential. These health care providers, who are on the front lines of the pandemic, are caring for the most vulnerable Canadians.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC) infection prevention and control guidelines complement provincial and territorial public health policies and procedures.
- The PHAC's National Advisory Committee on Infection Prevention and Control, comprised of subject-matter experts and front-line health care providers, worked with the PHAC to develop these guidelines.
- The FPT Special Advisory Committee on COVID-19 approved the guidelines and the technical summary.
- The PHAC guidelines do not have the force of law. They should be consulted in conjunction with existing provincial, territorial, and local legislation, regulations, and policies.

Revised infection prevention and control guidelines for acute care facilities

- This update to the guidelines was done in accordance with our approach to ensure their timeliness and to provide comprehensive recommendations based on the best available data.
- The guidelines highlight the need for environmental and administrative controls in facilities to protect health care workers and patients, as well as the importance of providing training in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Precautions against droplet and contact transmission are appropriate for most patient care. Aerosol-generating medical procedures require the use of an N95 mask and other PPE.
- The guidelines will remain provisional, as they may be modified as new scientific data become available.

Technical summary of new guidelines for wearing masks, eyewear, and face shields during shifts

- The PHAC recommends that all health care workers in acute care hospitals wear a medical mask and eye protection or face shield for the duration of their shifts in an acute care facility.



- This recommendation is based on new evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted by asymptomatic and presymptomatic carriers.
- Wearing a medical mask for the entire duration of the shift is an important measure that helps reduce the risk of transmission from health care workers to patients.
- Wearing a medical mask and eye protection or face shield for the entire duration of the shift is an important measure that helps reduce the risk of transmission from patients to health care workers.
- This recommendation applies to health care workers who are in direct contact with patients and to environmental services workers who need to enter patient care areas.
- To keep coronavirus out of health care facilities, it is also important that health care workers who experience symptoms associated with COVID-19 return home immediately and resume work only on the advice of their local public health authority.
- Health care workers should consult their provincial/territorial guidelines and facility policies regarding the wearing of masks, eye protection and other PPE, as well as any PPE preservation strategies that have been put in place.

Canada's supply of PPE and medical supplies

- Health care workers wear medical masks, including surgical masks, procedure masks and respirators (e.g., N95 masks). It is extremely important to maintain the supply of medical masks on an as-needed basis.
- The Government of Canada is working to ensure that health care workers have the PPE and medical supplies they need through bulk procurement in collaboration with the provinces and territories, by building national production capacity, and researching alternatives and ways to extend product life.
- Canada strives to rapidly allocate PPE and medical supplies to provinces and territories, in accordance with an approach agreed upon by federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of health.

Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions guidelines and concerns

- We have been in regular contact with the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions regarding their concerns about aspects of the revised guidelines.
- The Government of Canada developed the guidelines based on the best available evidence to protect the health and safety of health care workers.
- We will continue to re-evaluate and update the guidelines as the situation evolves and as we learn more about COVID-19.



Point-of-care risk assessment

- Before interacting with or intervening with a patient, health care workers should assess the risk of infection to themselves, other workers, and patients. This procedure, known as point-of-care risk assessment, is what helps to select the appropriate PPE for the situation.

Inclusion of cleaners and food providers potentially exposed to COVID-19

- The advice in these guidelines is intended for anyone working in an acute care facility, including cleaners and food providers.

Wearing surgical masks instead of N95 respirators

- The decision to wear a surgical mask or N95 mask should always be based on a point-of-care risk assessment.

PPE reuse and guidelines for health care facilities

- N95 masks are normally single-use products for health care workers.
- Canada is exploring ways to extend the life of N95 masks by decontaminating and reusing them. Decontamination of N95 masks has proven effective in other countries, including the United States.
- Canada is asking provinces and territories to set aside their used N95 masks until an effective decontamination process can be tested.
- Extending the life of PPE through decontamination is one way to ensure that Canada has sufficient reserves.

Prevention and control of coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Guidelines for home care settings

- Home care organizations, an essential component of the health care system, play an important role in preventing unnecessary admissions to hospitals and long-term care facilities by providing care and support to people in their homes.
- People receiving home care are often elderly or have health problems, making them susceptible to serious illness if they contract COVID-19. Preventing COVID-19 in this vulnerable population is a priority.
- The Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) provide recommendations for home care agencies and providers to prevent transmission of COVID-19 to front-line workers and to protect vulnerable clients.



- The PHAC's National Advisory Committee on Infection Prevention and Control, comprised of experts in the field and front-line care providers, worked with the PHAC to develop these guidelines, which were also endorsed by the federal/provincial/territorial (FPT) Special Advisory Committee on COVID-19.
- The PHAC guidelines are not mandatory. They should be consulted in conjunction with provincial, territorial, and local legislation, regulations, and policies.

Highlights of the Guidelines

- To prevent transmission of COVID-19 to clients, home care providers need to monitor their health and take their temperature daily to detect signs and symptoms of illness. If they show signs of infection, it is recommended that they be excluded from work until local public health authorities authorize their return.
- Home care providers should wear a mask during all visits to avoid transmitting COVID-19 to their clients before symptoms are detected.
- To protect themselves, front-line home care providers should contact their clients prior to visits to ask if they have signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if other members of their household have symptoms. If so, agencies and home care providers can then determine if the visit can be delayed or otherwise arranged to ensure everyone's safety.
- The use of eye protection for the duration of home visits is strongly recommended to prevent the possible transmission of COVID-19 to care providers from clients in whom infection has not yet been detected.

Canada's supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) is an important component of infection prevention and control measures that can protect home care providers and their clients from COVID-19.
- Home care providers should refer to provincial, territorial, and local guidelines and facility policies for specific recommendations regarding the use of masks, eye protection and other types of PPE, as well as PPE storage strategies.
- The Government of Canada is working to ensure that health care workers, including those providing home care services, have the PPE and medical supplies they need.
- This is being achieved through bulk purchasing in collaboration with the provinces and territories, building national production capacity, and exploring alternatives and ways to extend product life.

Long-term care facilities

- We call on all Canadians to help protect seniors and medically vulnerable people who are at the greatest risk of suffering serious complications from COVID-19.



- We must all work to stop the spread of the virus among residents of long-term care facilities and the workers who care for them.
- A no-visit policy should be seriously considered. If visits are permitted, they should be strictly limited to essential visits that are necessary to meet the basic personal medical or compassionate needs of residents. Essential visits should be limited to one person at a time for each resident.
- Like all Canadians, residents and staff in long-term care facilities should practise as much physical separation as possible, including during mealtimes.
- Because they have direct contact with the most vulnerable people in our society, who are at the greatest risk of serious illness, health care workers should not go to work if they have symptoms.
- We understand that to stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect the most vulnerable, Canadians must make difficult decisions and personal sacrifices.

Guidelines

- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) provides evidence-based guidance on infection prevention and control to complement the efforts of provincial and territorial governments in the monitoring, prevention and control of infections associated with health care.
- The Government of Canada has released the *Infection prevention and control for COVID-19: Interim guidance for long-term care homes* to assist employees and residents of long-term care facilities.
- This interim guidance is based on previous Canadian guidance developed for the coronavirus pandemic, lessons learned from the COVID-19 outbreak in China and other countries, and interim guidance from other Canadian and international organizations.

Public health guidelines for long-term care facilities

- Extreme vigilance is required in long-term care facilities to prevent employees from reporting to work if they have symptoms.
- Employees should be screened for COVID-19 symptoms before each shift, and those who begin to show symptoms during their shift should be managed immediately.
- Where possible, employers should work with their employees to restrict work to a single facility and limit the number of areas of the facility in which employees work.
- All employees and visitors must wear masks for the duration of their shift or visit to prevent transmission of the virus, even before they know they are sick.



- If visitors must come in, they should be screened for fever, cough or breathing difficulties, and should not be allowed in if they have symptoms related to COVID.
- Many facilities have already taken steps, such as banning visitors or other non-essential on-site services.
- Long-term care facilities and assisted-living facilities should also follow the recommendations of their provincial/territorial health authorities regarding the prevention of transmission of infections, including COVID-19.

Alberta's long-term care homes

- The Government of Canada is committed to protecting all Canadians, including the vulnerable.
- All levels of government are working closely together to ensure the harmonization of public health measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Public health authorities are closely monitoring the continuity and stability of the epidemic's slowdown in Canada, while carefully considering ways to ease public health restrictions where possible.
- The epidemiological situation of COVID-19 is different from one province and territory to another. This means that not all approaches will be the same across Canada and will need to be tailored to the unique challenges and context of the disease in each province and territory.
- Each Canadian province and territory is looking at different types of community settings, such as long-term care homes, and developing risk-based approaches and assessments based on what is happening within its borders.
- The Government of Canada is working with its provincial, territorial, and international partners to ensure that our response to the COVID-19 pandemic is based on the most up-to-date scientific information and assessment of the situation.

As to whether this approach is consistent with federal guidelines:

- Care in long-term care facilities is governed by provincial and territorial legislation.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada develops evidence-based infection prevention and control guidelines to complement provincial and territorial public health measures that address monitoring, prevention, and control of nosocomial infections.
- The federal guidelines recognize that provinces and territories may choose to allow visitors limited access to long-term care facilities, in accordance with their legislation and policies.



- In these circumstances, if access is permitted, it is recommended that all employees and visitors wear masks throughout their shift or visit to prevent transmission of the virus, even if they do not have any symptoms of illness.
- If visits are permitted, visitors must be tested for symptoms such as cough, fever and breathing difficulties and not enter a facility if they have symptoms related to COVID.
- Visitors should be reminded to wash their hands and use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before putting on and taking off their masks.
- These facilities must also follow the recommendations of the appropriate provincial or territorial health authorities to prevent the transmission of infections, including COVID-19, in long-term care facilities and assisted living facilities. Care in long-term care facilities is governed by provincial and territorial legislation.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's guidelines for infection prevention and control in long-term care facilities should be interpreted in conjunction with relevant provincial, territorial and local legislation, policies and regulations.
- As we enter the next phase of this pandemic, provinces and territories will begin to ease restrictions while emphasizing extreme caution.

Recommendations on death care services and mass deaths

- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has developed guidelines for the safe handling of human remains during the COVID-19 pandemic. All information presented in these guidelines is based on the latest scientific evidence.
- We know that it can be difficult to hear about such guidelines, especially for those who have lost a loved one, and we extend our deepest condolences to all those who have lost a family member, friend, or colleague to the disease.
- However, these guidelines for funeral services and mass deaths are an important part of pandemic planning and preparedness.
- Our understanding of the virus is constantly evolving, and the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through human remains is not yet known.
- With the collaboration of public health and infection prevention and control specialists and the Funeral Service Association of Canada, we have developed these guidelines to ensure safe service provision for families and to protect the health of those who work to provide these services to the public.



If pressed on the development of guidelines in response to recent outbreaks in long-term care facilities

- These guidelines have been developed to support proactive planning by the funeral services industry for various possible scenarios during the pandemic.

If pressed on funeral or burial practices or treatment of the bodies of Indigenous people and members of various ethnic, religious, and cultural groups

- Various religious, ethnic, and cultural groups have specific guidelines for treating the remains of deceased persons. It is important to adhere to and accommodate these practices as much as possible while protecting the health and safety of the community.
- We recommend that leaders of religious and cultural communities be involved in the planning of funeral services to ensure that funeral arrangements always respect cultural and religious values.
- These leaders may also be able to provide or facilitate cultural or religious support, such as bereavement counselling for those in mourning.

If pressed on what happens if a Canadian dies from COVID-19 outside Canada

- You may safely repatriate the remains of a person whose death is attributed to COVID-19 to Canada, provided certain conditions are met.
- In all cases, you must have all relevant documents, including a death certificate.
- There are two methods for repatriating the remains of a deceased person with a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 infection:
 - one for a cremated body;
 - the other for a body transported in a hermetically sealed container.
- We are aware that this could impose certain restrictions on families seeking to return home with the remains of a loved one. These restrictions are necessary for the protection of those who come into contact with the remains during the repatriation process.
- General information on what to do in the event of a death outside Canada can be obtained from funeral service providers in your community or by visiting <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-info/death-abroad> on the Government of Canada website.



If pressed on the management of mass deaths

- Based on the experience of other countries, it is important to prepare for an increase in the number of deaths caused by COVID-19 in Canada, an increase that could exceed the usual capacity to provide funeral services.
- The PHAC has published guidelines to help local and regional planners, community leaders, funeral industry workers, medical examiners and coroners prepare to manage any sudden increase in deaths associated with the pandemic.
- The guidelines are based on the latest scientific evidence and provide recommendations for body transport, planning, storage capacity and other technical factors.

Isolation, quarantine (voluntary isolation) and physical distancing

- There is a difference between being advised to quarantine (self-isolation) and the advice to isolate. It is important to note that these measures are in place to protect the health and safety of Canadians.

Isolation

- Isolation means staying home when you have symptoms of COVID-19 and you may have been exposed to the virus. By avoiding contact with other people, you help prevent the spread of the disease to others in your home and community.

You must:

- **go directly to your home and stay there** if:
 - you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or if you are waiting to receive the results of a laboratory test for COVID-19;
 - you experience any symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild, and:
 - you have been in contact with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19;
 - a public health official has told you (either directly or through public communications or a self-assessment tool) that you may have been exposed to COVID-19;
 - you have just returned from a trip outside Canada and are showing symptoms of COVID-19 (mandatory). [Footnote*](#)
- monitor your symptoms as directed by your health care provider or the [public health authority](#), until they advise you that you are no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others;
- immediately contact your health care provider or [public health authority](#) if your symptoms get worse, and follow their instructions.
- **Limit contact with others**
 - Do not leave your home unless you need to seek medical attention.
 - Do not use public transportation (such as buses and taxis).



- Arrange for groceries and supplies to be dropped off at your door to minimize contact.
- Stay in a separate room and use a separate bathroom from other family members, if possible.
- If you have to be in contact with others, practise physical distancing, keeping at least two metres between you and the other person.
- Avoid contact with people with chronic diseases, those with weakened immune systems and the elderly.
- Keep interactions brief and when you cough, sneeze or if you need to be in the same room as other people in the house, wear a medical mask or, if a medical mask is not available, wear a non-medical mask or face shield (i.e., made to completely cover the nose and mouth and fit snugly over the face, held in place with ties behind the ears or cords behind the head and neck).
- Follow the instructions from your public health authority regarding safe use and disposal or washing of masks.
- Avoid all contact with animals, as there have been several reports of people passing COVID-19 to their pets.
- **Keep your hands clean**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and dry them with disposable paper towels or a reusable dry towel, replacing it when it becomes wet.
 - You can also remove impurities with a wet wipe and then use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm or into a tissue.
- **Avoid contaminating common items and surfaces**
 - At least once a day, clean and disinfect surfaces you touch often, such as toilets, bedside tables, doorknobs, phones, and television remotes.
 - Do not share personal items with others, such as toothbrushes, towels, bedding, utensils, or electronic devices.
 - To disinfect objects and surfaces, use only approved hard-surface disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN). A DIN is an 8-digit number assigned by Health Canada that confirms that the disinfectant product is approved in Canada and is safe to use.
 - Place contaminated items that cannot be cleaned in a plastic-lined container, seal the container tightly and dispose of it with other household waste.
 - Close the toilet lid before flushing.
 - Masks, including non-medical masks and face coverings, may trap your respiratory droplets and prevent them from contaminating surfaces around you. However, wearing a mask does not eliminate the need for cleaning.
- **Take care of yourself**
 - Monitor your symptoms as instructed by your health care provider or the public health authority.



- If your symptoms get worse, contact your health care provider or public health authority immediately and follow their instructions.
- Rest, eat a balanced diet and stay in touch with others using "communication devices."

- **Supplies to have at home during isolation**

- Medical masks, if available, for the individual and health care providers. Otherwise, a non-medical mask or face covering (i.e., made to completely cover the nose and mouth and tightly fitted to the face, held in place with ties behind the ears or behind the head and neck)
- Eye protection (face shield or goggles) for use by health care providers only
- Disposable (not reusable) gloves for use by health care providers only
- Disposable paper towels
- Tissues
- Waste container with plastic liner
- Thermometer
- Over-the-counter medication to reduce fever (e.g., ibuprofen or acetaminophen)
- Running water
- Hand soap
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol
- Dish soap
- Regular laundry soap
- Regular household cleaning products
- Disinfectant for hard surfaces; if not available, concentrated bleach (5%) and a separate container for dilution
- Wipes infused with alcohol or other approved cleaning products for frequently touched electronic devices

Quarantine (voluntary isolation)

- You must quarantine for 14 days if you have no **symptoms** and **one** of the following situations applies to you:
 - you are returning from a trip **outside Canada** (self-isolation mandatory);
 - you have been in close contact with a person who has or may have COVID-19;
 - you have been informed by a public health official that you may have been exposed to the virus and that you must quarantine.
- Quarantining means that for 14 days you must:
 - **stay home** and monitor your symptoms, even if they are mild;
 - avoid contact with others to prevent spreading of the virus in the early stages of the disease;
 - practise physical distancing in your home and community.
- If you develop even mild symptoms, stay home and isolate yourself immediately from other people who live with you. Immediately call a public health professional or public health authority.



Physical distancing

- We advise all Canadians to stay home as much as possible. If you must leave home, practise physical distancing.
- We know that physical distancing is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of disease during an epidemic.
- We all have to respect the physical distancing instructions, even if you:
 - have no COVID-19 symptoms;
 - have no known risk of having been exposed to the virus;
 - have not travelled outside Canada in the last 14 days.
- You can practise physical distancing by making changes to your daily routine to minimize close contact with others. For example:
 - avoid crowded areas and gatherings;
 - avoid customary greetings, such as handshakes;
 - limit contact with people at higher risk (seniors, people in poor health, etc.);
 - whenever possible, maintain a distance of at least two arm lengths (about two metres) between you and other people.
- The most effective measures to stay healthy and prevent the spread of any respiratory infections are the following:
 - wash your hands often with soap and running water for at least 20 seconds;
 - cough and sneeze into your arm, not your hands;
 - avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, especially if you have not washed your hands;
 - avoid close contact with sick people;
 - stay home if you are sick to avoid spreading the disease to others.
- When keeping a physical distance of 2 metres between you and others, you can:
 - greet people with a wave instead of a handshake, kiss or hug;
 - have food delivered or shop online;
 - ask a family member, neighbour or friend to help you with essential errands;
 - exercise at home;
 - go outside to get some fresh air, run, bike or walk your dog;
 - eat and play with family and friends online;
 - use technology, such as video calling, to keep in touch with friends and family;
 - work from home;
 - let your creativity run wild by making chalk art or organizing games and obstacle courses in your yard.

Be prepared

- There are simple practical steps you can take to prepare if you or a member of your household gets sick or if COVID-19 becomes widespread in your community.



- **Make a plan**
 - Get essential items (enough for a few weeks) so that you don't have to leave your home if you get sick.
 - Avoid panic shopping. Add a few extra items to your cart each time you shop. In this way, you will lighten the burden on suppliers and possibly your own financial burden.
 - Refill your prescription medications.
- **Make other arrangements in case you get sick or have to care for someone who is sick.**
For example:
 - Have someone else take care of the children if you or your children's regular caregiver gets sick.
 - If you are caring for dependants, ask someone else to take over.
 - Discuss with your employer the possibility of working from home.
- We are aware that the novel coronavirus can cause a range of symptoms, from mild to severe. Some people may not recognize the signs of disease when the first symptoms appear, as they resemble those of a cold or flu.
- If you have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing) and think you may have COVID-19, contact a health care professional before arriving in person so that appropriate measures can be taken when you arrive.
- Do not report to the office of a health care professional without calling in advance, so that appropriate action can be taken when you arrive.
- **Stay informed**
Consult credible sources for up-to-date information and advice:
 - Canada.ca/coronavirus webpage
 - National COVID-19 toll-free telephone number (1-833-784-4397)
 - Government of Canada's Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn social media accounts
 - Provincial, territorial, and municipal government websites and social media accounts

Enforcement of mandatory isolation and quarantine (voluntary isolation)

- For questions regarding the possibility of Canada considering the imposition of a fine or the arrest of persons who do not follow the advice of voluntary isolation:
 - We call on Canadians to do the **right** thing by continuing to stay in their own homes whenever possible, and to practise physical distancing if they leave their homes.
 - Every Canadian has a role to play and everyone needs to understand that they may have been exposed to the virus during recent travel outside the country, and the risk it could potentially pose to other Canadians, including those who are more vulnerable.



- Canadians should also follow the instructions of local public health authorities and stay home if they are ill.
- Non-compliance with instructions is a cause for concern. Anyone who is asked to self-isolate should take this request seriously and stay home. If it is necessary to obtain food or medication, ask a friend or family member for help.
- For Canadians who do not need to self-isolate, they will of course have to leave their homes to get essential items such as food and medication. As long as these individuals do not have symptoms of COVID-19, they can also continue to go outside and exercise outdoors while practising physical distancing.
- By doing so, we will protect the elderly and medically vulnerable who are most at risk from COVID-19. We need to help as many Canadians as possible stay healthy.

If pressed

- *Quarantine Acts* at all levels of government have very strict provisions for the enforcement of measures to protect the health and safety of Canadians. Some provinces and territories have implemented mandatory isolation orders.
- Such extreme measures could be taken, but we are not there yet and we continue to rely on Canadians to help their neighbours, friends and family by staying home as much as possible, washing their hands often and avoiding close contact with people who are ill.

Criteria for individuals to end home isolation after COVID-19 symptoms

- Based on the latest scientific data and in consultation with provincial and territorial experts, we have updated our guidelines on when people can end a period of isolation at home after developing symptoms of COVID-19.
- The new guidelines recommend that people in home isolation, who had symptoms consistent with COVID-19, be allowed to end the isolation period no sooner than 10 days after the onset of the first symptoms, provided they are feeling better and do not have a fever.
- The minimum of 10 days is based on when these people should no longer be likely to spread the virus to others. Some people may have a persistent cough after contracting a disease like COVID-19, and we do not want them to stay isolated longer than necessary.
- These new guidelines mean that people who isolated at home no longer need to have two negative test results for COVID-19 at least 24 hours apart, as long as they no longer present symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
- This change does not apply to hospitalized patients.



- Provinces and territories may impose longer isolation periods.
- People working in health care facilities may have to meet additional requirements, as defined by their employer or by provincial or territorial authorities before they can return to their place of work.
- Everyone must make an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Canada and flatten the curve. The use of proven measures, such as continuing the practice of physical distancing once home isolation is over, will contribute to our overall public health efforts and to the protection of Canada's most vulnerable people.

If pressed on why the criteria have changed

- Across Canada, we need to use our laboratory testing resources strategically.
- This change in the approach to laboratory testing will help ensure optimal use of limited laboratory and health care resources.
- Not all home-isolated individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 need to undergo a laboratory test to confirm or rule out infection, provided they follow strict guidelines for home isolation.
- The updated criteria will allow provinces and territories to recommend a period of home isolation for individuals with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 without requiring multiple laboratory tests.

If pressed on how the period was determined

- Research and data collection on COVID-19 continues to grow and evolve.
- According to an unpublished study, when scientists tried to find active viruses in samples from people with COVID-19, it was not until the eighth day after the onset of disease/symptoms that active viruses could no longer be detected. When samples from these same individuals were tested using another test (polymerase chain reaction [PCR]), many of them tested positive because this test detects both active and inactive viruses.
- In other words, some people may receive a positive test result even though they are no longer likely to transmit the virus to someone else.
- In the absence of a large body of conclusive data, a minimum of 10 days of home isolation is an adequate recommendation at this time.



If pressed on whether the new criteria are more or less stringent than the previous ones

- The new directive replaces the current, more stringent and resource-intensive requirement that two negative test results be obtained before a person can be released from isolation at home.

Wearing of non-medical masks (and other face coverings) by the general public

- Canadian public health guidelines for COVID-19 are evolving at the same time as the rapid progress in our understanding of COVID-19 and the collection of evidence. We continually review this data as it is generated and collaborate with our national and international partners to deepen our knowledge.
- The following are proven methods to prevent transmission of COVID-19:
 - stay home as much as possible;
 - practise physical distancing;
 - wash your hands;
 - protect the most vulnerable people from infection and limit their exposure to others;
 - cough into a tissue or sleeve.
- It is essential that these measures be maintained.
- Health care workers need medical masks, including surgical masks, procedure masks and respirators such as N95 masks. It is extremely important that these masks be reserved for health care workers, as they are urgently needed for medical interventions and for the care of people with COVID-19.
- There is no evidence that wearing a non-medical mask (e.g., a handcrafted mask made of a fabric) in the community protects the person wearing it.
- Since our goal is to stop the spread of COVID-19 by all possible means, we believe, in light of new information on both presymptomatic and asymptomatic transmission, that wearing a non-medical mask, even in the absence of symptoms, is an additional measure you can take to help protect those around you, during short periods when it is not possible to physically distance yourself in public (e.g., at the grocery store or in cramped areas such as on public transit).
- Wearing a non-medical mask in the community does not mean that you can forego proven public health measures; no mask can replace physical distancing.
- All recommendations for physical distancing, frequent hand washing and staying home are based on practices that are recognized as the most effective in protecting you and your family from infection.



How Wearing Non-Medical Masks Can Help Protect Others

- Wearing a non-medical mask is another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent your respiratory droplets from contaminating others or landing on surfaces.
- Just like covering your mouth with a tissue or sleeve when you cough, a cloth mask or face shield can reduce the risk of others being exposed to your respiratory droplets.

Factors to consider if wearing a non-medical mask

- If wearing a non-medical mask makes you feel safe and prevents you from touching your nose and mouth, that is good. However, remember not to touch or rub your eyes, as the eyes are also a path of infection.
- It is important that Canadians understand the benefits and limitations of masks; if they choose to wear a non-medical mask, they should use it with caution:
 - avoid moving or adjusting it often;
 - avoid sharing it with others;
 - it must made to completely cover the nose and mouth and be tightly fitted to the face, held in place with ties behind the ears or behind the head and neck.
- It is also important to know that masks can become contaminated when you go outside or handle them.
- People under 2 years of age, those who have breathing difficulties, are unconscious, or who are unable to remove a mask on their own, should not wear a non-medical mask or other face covering.
- Keep in mind that non-medical masks will not prevent the spread of COVID-19 if public health and hygiene guidelines, including frequent hand washing and physical distancing, are not strictly followed at all times.
- The canada.ca/coronavirus website is updated regularly and contains information on measures to be taken, such as hand washing when putting on or taking off the mask. This site also includes information on how to wash cloth masks or safely dispose of other non-medical masks (including dust masks).

Modelling and monitoring

COVID-19 Monitoring

- For several weeks now, the Canadian health care system has been on alert and has been working to detect possible cases of COVID-19.
- Canada continues to focus on containment to delay and slow the spread of COVID-19. We do this by quickly identifying cases, conducting a meticulous search for close



contacts, and using proven public health measures such as isolation. We also recommend that Canadians practise physical distancing.

- Canada has a highly integrated federal, provincial, and territorial approach to monitoring, involving front-line health care facilities and laboratories across the country with effective detection capabilities for respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Public health laboratories across Canada are working together to make COVID-19 test results publicly available every week. These reports will allow us to track where cases of COVID-19 have been identified and will provide an early signal of potential outbreaks that may indicate a spread in the community.
- Hospital monitoring is another important means of detecting COVID-19 cases. These facilities allow us to monitor people with respiratory symptoms, including patients with pneumonia or serious infections, even if they have not travelled to an affected country. This is another way to expand the scope of our monitoring to detect signs of possible spread in the community so that public health authorities can take appropriate action.
- Finally, Canada has networks of pediatricians and family physicians that are critical to monitoring. These networks include primary care providers, who are often the first to detect new or unexpected patterns of disease and can provide an early warning that we have an emerging health problem.
- It is by bringing together data from all these sources that we can detect signals and analyze transmission patterns to closely monitor the emergence and spread of COVID-19 in communities across Canada.

Data modelling (April 28)

- The Government of Canada continues to work with its provincial, territorial, and international partners to ensure that the response to the COVID-19 outbreak is based on the latest scientific data and situational assessment.
- We are constantly analyzing data and results from clinical and epidemiological studies as they become available to determine when public health measures are working and when we need to do more to control the epidemic.
- We are also working with provincial and territorial governments and universities to predict how COVID-19 could spread in Canada in the future and to estimate a range of possible cases, hospitalizations and deaths that could occur over the next few weeks and months.
- Based on these models, we can prepare our health care system to deliver care to the projected number of patients and determine what public health measures may be needed to change the course of the epidemic in Canada.
- Our actions have a significant impact on the models. We can all help reduce the impact of COVID-19 in Canada by maintaining our physical distancing efforts.



- Since infection rates vary across the country, projections of the effects also vary from one province and territory to another.
- Models cannot predict what will happen, but they can help us understand what might happen and thus help us plan and take action to ensure the best possible outcome.
- To model the course of COVID-19, we need to make assumptions based on incomplete data and scientific knowledge that is still evolving. These assumptions are changing as new information about the virus and more data about the epidemic in Canada become available.
- We are continually improving the models to provide Canadians with the best possible information about outcomes.

Case and death rates in Quebec

- Several factors contribute to the higher number of reported cases and deaths in Quebec compared with other provinces and territories.
- First, the provinces of Ontario and Quebec have reported several outbreaks in long-term care facilities and seniors' residences. These environments drive the numbers of transmissions and deaths among older people. In Quebec, the resident population in these facilities accounts for more than 80% of deaths.
- Long-term care facilities continue to experience outbreaks, which influence the number of cases and deaths in some provinces. According to provincial and territorial websites and media reports, over 63% (1,157/1,834) of cases occurred in long-term care facilities.
- The timing of the **spring break** was another factor that may have contributed to the higher numbers. In Quebec, spring break occurs earlier than in other provinces, so people may have travelled to countries and regions where the outbreak had not yet been reported.
 - The way cases are reported in Quebec would also contribute to the higher number of reported cases and deaths. Quebec includes in its data cases that present symptoms of COVID and have been in contact with a person who has received a laboratory-confirmed diagnosis, without having received laboratory confirmation themselves. These cases and deaths are included in Quebec's figures, whereas they are not included in the data of other provinces and territories. Quebec's public health authority can provide more details on how the province reports its confirmed cases.



- Quebec was able to scale up its testing capabilities very early in the outbreak through targeted testing, including testing for health care employees, residents in long-term care facilities and respiratory hospitalization cases, allowing it to identify cases.

If pressed to know if the case numbers in other provinces and territories are underestimated

- Other provinces and territories publicly report only the number of individuals with a laboratory-confirmed diagnosis.
- We recognize that laboratory-confirmed cases do not paint the true picture of infected individuals where the virus is circulating. This is because sick people may not necessarily be screened for laboratory confirmation.
- Cases with mild symptoms may go unnoticed or unreported, and some people may have no symptoms at all. Therefore, public health measures, such as physical distancing, are crucial.

Epidemiology of the virus

- In Canada and around the world, researchers are actively studying all aspects of the novel coronavirus outbreak to better understand the disease and the possible progression of the outbreak.
- Canada is following the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, which recommend a two-week (14-day) quarantine period.
- The WHO indicated on February 10, 2020, that it is not considering changing the recommended quarantine period.
- The WHO warned that a 24-day incubation period could be a statistical outlier or an undetected second exposure, where a person who is known to have been exposed to the virus is exposed to the virus again, but that second exposure goes unrecognized. If the person develops the disease due to the second exposure, the incubation period may appear to have lasted longer than 14 days, whereas the counter should have been reset at the second exposure.
- To date, there is no verified data showing that the incubation period is longer than 14 days.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) actively participates in numerous expert groups that are looking at how the disease is transmitted, developing models to predict how it might spread, and developing guidance on how to prevent and control infections based on the most up-to-date information.
- The PHAC continues to liaise with international partners, including the WHO, to better understand the epidemiology of this disease.



Analysis

- Canadians can rely on the methods and capabilities of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML).
- The NML is world-renowned for its scientific excellence.
- Provincial public health laboratories can screen for COVID-19 with a high degree of accuracy.
- The NML provides laboratory reference services to all provinces and territories. These screening services provide various forms of support to provincial and territorial laboratories across Canada, including confirmatory testing, quality assurance testing and in-depth analysis of difficult-to-diagnose samples.

Reagents and tests for COVID-19

- An essential part of the public health response to this pandemic is timely and accurate testing. These tests allow for early detection of cases so that further spread can be controlled.
- The Government of Canada is taking steps to increase testing capacity as quickly as possible so that Canadian public health and diagnostic laboratories have the resources to test for COVID-19.
- Several commercial reagents approved by Health Canada can be used to test for COVID-19 infection. There is a global shortage of many of these reagents, which affects laboratory capacity. We need Canadian solutions to address this problem.
- The shortage of reagents required for COVID-19 testing is affecting Canada's testing capacity. The National Microbiology Laboratory of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has developed a reagent to help address this shortage. The reagent is mass-produced by LuminUltra Technologies Ltd., a company based in New Brunswick.
- The PHAC has also signed a temporary license agreement with bioMérieux Canada to receive the rights and formulation of its reagent used in the diagnosis of COVID-19.
- The Government of Canada's testing priorities are access to test reagents, evaluation of commercial testing technologies, and access to licensed test kits to allow provinces and territories to expand their testing capacity.

About LuminUltra

- Scientists at Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) have replicated and validated a commercial reagent for COVID-19 using open-source information. This reagent is comparable to those used in diagnostic laboratories across the country.



- LuminUltra Technologies Ltd. purchases the raw materials needed to develop the reagent batches formulated by the NML and coordinates the shipment of the reagent to public health laboratories across the country.
- LuminUltra shipped its first batch of reagent on April 10, 2020.
- At full capacity, LuminUltra will be able to manufacture reagents for up to 500,000 tests per week.
- It is anticipated that as its production capacity increases, LuminUltra will be able to produce sufficient reagents to help meet domestic demand.

About the bioMérieux agreement

- bioMérieux is a French company that produces reagents used in COVID-19 diagnostic tests. The company is having difficulties obtaining some of the ingredients needed to manufacture its product and meet the global demand.
- As part of an innovative public-private partnership, the PHAC has signed a temporary license agreement with bioMérieux Canada, at no cost, to receive the rights and formulation of their reagents used in COVID-19 diagnostics. The production systems for these reagents are at various stages of development and testing in to alleviate some of the reagent shortages in the near future.

What are reagents?

- A reagent is a chemical formulation used to process samples for laboratory testing.
- The specific reagents produced for COVID-19 testing are extraction reagents.
- They extract the virus from a sample to detect genetic material and determine whether a patient's test for COVID-19 infection is positive or negative.

Screening tests for individuals

- Laboratory testing for the novel coronavirus in symptomatic individuals has obvious clinical and public health value but has no value for testing in asymptomatic individuals.
- Canada continues and will continue to conduct testing for all symptomatic individuals as part of our evidence-based approach, while taking into consideration the evolving scientific knowledge of other testing scenarios. Our approach will keep pace with evolving science, and policies and protocols will be updated accordingly.
- One thing is certain about our approach: testing is done for all symptomatic individuals and our threshold for symptoms is very low.



- It is important to understand that this is not a simple and straightforward issue, and that some scientific data is uncertain.

Reasons why asymptomatic people are not tested for COVID-19

- It is important to focus on testing the right people at the right time.
- In Canada, screening focuses on people with symptoms resembling those of COVID-19.
- Screening asymptomatic people is not considered an effective way to detect and prevent the spread of this virus and could provide a false sense of security.
- Testing of asymptomatic individuals provides a false sense of security because it does not mean that they will not become symptomatic and develop the disease during the incubation period. The timing of testing is important. That is why we have taken the precaution of putting people back into quarantine in Canada. Monitoring the 14-day incubation period provides real security and is more effective in preventing spread than a test result that is potentially a false negative.
- In addition, when an asymptomatic individual tests positive, the significance and implications of that result are not clear. A positive result may indicate the detection of generic virus material but does not necessarily mean that the person is contagious to others.

Unusable swabs

- The Government of Canada is aware of the problems with some swabs received in early April.
- These swabs were delivered as part of a bulk order of 8.85 million swabs that Canada expected to receive in April and May.
- The manufacturer (ESBE Scientific) is a reputable company, licensed by Health Canada. We have been informed that the company has suspended production to resolve manufacturing issues. As a result, future deliveries of swabs will likely be delayed while the company resolves its quality issues.
- The problem could affect future orders. The Public Health Agency of Canada continues to work directly with the provinces and territories to identify their medical supply needs and place bulk orders. Public Services and Procurement Canada will continue to identify all suppliers that can meet Canada's needs.

Changes to the Spartan test kit authorization

- On March 26, 2020, Health Canada issued a conditional authorization to Spartan Bioscience Inc. for the use of the Spartan Cube for research purposes only.



- This authorization was granted under the [Interim Order](#) respecting medical devices for use in relation to COVID-19, which allows Health Canada to authorize the use of devices after an expedited scientific review process, based on minimum requirements.
- On April 11, 2020, Health Canada completed its scientific review to ensure that the kit met safety and effectiveness requirements. The conditions of authorization were amended and the restriction on the sale of the product for non-research purposes was lifted.
- Health Canada's regulatory decision was based on laboratory analysis of the product and not on clinical evidence of its efficacy. The review took into consideration that subsequent clinical validation would be performed by public health laboratories to determine performance in a clinical setting. This approach is consistent with that taken by other reputable regulatory agencies.
- On May 1, 2020, the National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) submitted its final report to Health Canada on clinical trials conducted in three provinces (Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba) using Spartan swabs to collect samples directly from patients under clinical conditions.
- The report explains that although the Cube performed well in the laboratory, in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications, there were performance issues in the clinical trial. These problems appear to be related to proprietary swabs that would not collect enough mucous material for screening.
- Considering the clinical results, on May 2, 2020, Health Canada imposed conditions on the authorization of the product to limit its sale for research purposes only, until the company could provide data demonstrating the product's adequate clinical performance.
- Health Canada is not revoking the authorization, based on evidence that the kit works well in the laboratory. The Spartan kit may therefore continue to be sold for research purposes only until the company can provide data demonstrating adequate clinical performance of the product.
- Health Canada will continue to work with Spartan as the company strives to meet the regulatory requirements that will allow the use of point-of-care testing.

If pressed on the number of tests that were distributed following authorization of the test kits

- Spartan Bioscience forwarded its distribution dossier to Health Canada on May 2 and confirmed that it had distributed 5,500 test kits for research purposes only in a clinical setting to four public health organizations:
 - Alberta Health Services
 - CHU de Québec – Université Laval
 - Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion



- Public Health Agency of Canada

- These organizations are aware of the new authorization conditions imposed by Health Canada.
- Health Canada has asked the company to voluntarily recall the products to prevent them from being used in a screening context at this time. The company has agreed to do so.
- On May 2, Health Canada sent a regulatory letter to the company indicating the new conditions for authorization, in accordance with Section 6 of the Interim Order. The letter also outlined the steps to be followed for the voluntary kit recall.
- Health Canada has limited the sale of the test kits to research until adequate evidence of clinical performance can be provided and evaluated.

If pressed on the details of the recall

- The recall includes the following:
 - issuing a notice informing all customers of the risks associated with the use of the product for diagnostic purposes and the measures to be taken to mitigate these risks;
 - requesting the recovery of all unused single-use devices and components (e.g., reagents and swabs) from non-laboratory settings and laboratories using the product for diagnostic purposes;
 - requesting the recovery of swabs only from laboratories that will continue to use the device for research purposes.

If pressed on Health Canada's review of the Spartan product

- On March 26, 2020, Health Canada issued an authorization to Spartan Bioscience Inc. for the use of its Spartan Cube provided that the sale of this product be limited to research purposes only. This authorization was issued under the Interim Order Respecting the Medical Devices for Use in Relation to COVID-19, which allows Health Canada to authorize the use of devices after an expedited scientific review process, based on minimum requirements.
- On April 11, 2020, Health Canada completed its scientific review to ensure that the kit met safety and effectiveness requirements. The conditions of authorization were amended, and the restriction on the sale of the product for non-research purposes was lifted.
- Health Canada's regulatory decision was based on laboratory analysis of the product and not on clinical evidence of its efficacy. The review took into consideration that subsequent clinical validation would be performed by public health laboratories to determine performance in a clinical setting. This approach is consistent with that taken by other reputable regulatory agencies.
- On May 1, 2020, the NML submitted its final report to Health Canada on clinical trials conducted in three provinces (Alberta, Ontario, and Manitoba) using Spartan swabs to



collect samples directly from patients under clinical conditions. These clinical trials are critical because they uncover performance issues that would not show up in the laboratory. The report explains that although the Cube performed well in the laboratory, in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications, there were performance issues in the clinical trial. These problems appear to be related to proprietary swabs that would not collect enough mucous material for screening. Considering the clinical results, Health Canada amended the terms of the authorization to restrict the sale of the Spartan cube to research purposes only, until the company could resolve performance-related issues with the kit and provide sales data for the kit.

If pressed on the Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) review of the kit

- As part of its research efforts, the NML of the Public Health Agency of Canada conducts the scientific review of new medical devices.
- Given the urgency of the situation, the NML is conducting test validation and performance evaluation of diagnostic equipment such as COVID-19 test kits.
- This validation function is part of scientific research and is independent of Health Canada's regulatory approval process. Although the validation process is separate from the Health Canada approval process, the NML works closely with Health Canada to share the knowledge gained through the review process.
- The NML tests laboratory supplies associated with the clinical diagnosis of COVID-19 to ensure they comply with the gold standard used in public health laboratories. The validation process seeks to determine if the product can be used to obtain reliable and accurate results for the diagnosis of COVID-19.

If pressed on the government's purchase of the Spartan kit

- The Government of Canada has entered a supply contract with Spartan to guarantee the supply of these kits. The contract is conditional on Health Canada's authorization to sell the kit in Canada.

Spartan COVID-19 rapid test kits

- Early diagnosis is critical to slowing and reducing the spread of COVID-19 in Canada.
- As part of Canada's plan to mobilize industry to fight COVID-19, Health Canada has authorized a portable COVID-19 rapid test kit for health care providers to detect infections faster and more easily. This will help stop the spread of the virus.
- The Spartan Bioscience test kit can diagnose COVID-19 in less than an hour without having to send a sample to a laboratory.



- The scientific review of Spartan's diagnostic test device was conducted under tight timelines as part of the Interim Order announced by Minister of Health Patty Hajdu on March 18, 2020. Health Canada's review concluded that the device meets the requirements for safety and effectiveness.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory (NML) has worked with Spartan to accelerate the development and validation of its point-of-care technology, which will be particularly useful in remote areas.
- Health Canada will continue to monitor and assess the safety and effectiveness of these rapid field test kits to ensure they are working properly and provide accurate results.
- We continue to work with companies from coast to coast to coast to ensure that our health care workers have the tools they need to care for Canadians across the country.

If pressed on the accuracy of test kits:

- Health Canada has maintained a science-based approach to pandemic management, and the process for authorization under an Interim Order includes a scientific pre-market review.
- Spartan Bioscience's diagnostic test kit was authorized by Health Canada under an Interim Order put in place by the Minister to allow the exceptional importation of medical products as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The authorization follows a scientific assessment by Health Canada reviewers to ensure the device meets standards for safety and effectiveness.
- For more information on the performance of the Spartan test, please contact the manufacturer directly.

If pressed on the number of test kits to be purchased:

- The Government of Canada has amended its supply contract with Spartan to secure the supply of the devices and 40,000 test kits per month for April, May, and June 2020, and an additional 200,000 test kits per month from July 2020 to March 2021.
- The Government of Canada is working to allocate these medical supplies quickly to provinces and territories based on an approach agreed upon by federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of health.

About Spartan:

- Spartan Bioscience is an Ottawa-based company.
- Spartan's research is supported by the National Research Council of Canada's Industrial Research Assistance Program.
- The company has been awarded a contract by the Government of Canada to accelerate its pioneering work on rapid diagnostic testing for COVID-19.



About the Interim Order:

- As a public health emergency measure, the Interim Order provides accelerated access to medical devices related to COVID-19.
- As a result of the Interim Order, new diagnostic tests are readily available in Canada. They are listed on the Health Canada website.
- The Interim Order will also ensure that other medical devices related to COVID-19 will be available to treat, mitigate or prevent COVID-19, as needed.
- An Interim Order is one of the fastest mechanisms available to the Government of Canada to help make health products available in the event of a larger scale public health emergency.

If pressed on the American directive allowing unauthorized health products:

- Health Canada will continue to use all tools at its disposal to accelerate the supply of safe and effective health products related to COVID-19. However, the department does not provide blanket approval for unauthorized drugs or devices. We will inform Canadians of any new information as it becomes available.

If pressed on cost recovery:

- To remove barriers for manufacturers during this time of public health need, Health Canada will waive all application fees for COVID-19 medical devices subject to this Interim Order.

Serology and immunity certificates

- Internationally, efforts are being made to determine whether those who have recovered from the disease can safely return to work. No decision has yet been made in Canada regarding the possibility of certifying people's immune status.
- Since the virus causing COVID-19 is new, we need more data before we can know whether people who have recovered from the disease will have long-term protective immunity.
- At this point, we do not know if people who have recovered will have immunity and how long this immunity can last, whether it is possible to get COVID-19 twice or whether the disease will be milder or more severe the second time.
- We recognize that it can be difficult to wait for scientific data, but as we learn more about COVID-19, we are required to use the public health measures that we know work.



- We continue to recommend that Canadians stay home, wash their hands well and practise physical distancing. These are proven public health measures.
- We are working hard to improve our knowledge of COVID-19 in Canada so that we can continue to adapt our response to slow the spread of the virus.

Pan-Canadian study to track COVID-19

- We are learning more about COVID-19 every day and keep abreast of new scientific information as it becomes available. The scientific data collected through the work of the COVID-19 Immunity Task Force will provide essential knowledge to inform decision making.
- Extensive serological surveys (blood tests) of the Canadian population will be conducted to measure the scope and magnitude of COVID-19 cases across the country.
- This effort needs to be well coordinated and executed to ensure that the results that will guide policy decisions on how bring the country back to normal or a "new normal" are optimal.
- We are establishing a Task Force of organizations to work under the guidance of a Board of Directors to set priorities and recommend projects to be funded by the Government of Canada. The leadership team is comprised of three individuals recognized for their contributions to research, academia and innovation in public health and health care, both in Canada and internationally.
- The co-chair of the administration committee will be:
 - Dr. David Naylor, renowned for his qualities as a scientific and academic leader and for his successful management of large, complex organizations;
 - Dr. Catherine Hankins, who will bring to the Board her national and international experience in leading large and complex research projects and building partnerships to advance public health priorities;
 - Dr. Tim Evans, Director of McGill University's School of Population and Global Health, will lead the secretariat for the effective delivery of this complex initiative.
- The Task Force will kick-start, support, and harmonize the rapid design and implementation of population-based studies that will produce reliable first estimates of immunity to SARS-CoV-2, in the general population and in priority populations in Canada.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory will be part of the Task Force. It will standardize testing and support the acquisition of commercial test kits (once approved) to support the effective and consistent activities of the Task Force.
- Rapid and representative national surveys provide a snapshot of the current situation and what to expect if there is a second wave of infections. They can also shed light on



the potential immune status of vulnerable populations, such as members of Indigenous communities and residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities.

- Serological surveys will help guide important public health decisions once a vaccine is developed.

If pressed on serological tests

- Serological tests are blood tests that detect the presence of antibodies to specific viruses in blood samples. In the case of COVID-19, they can tell us whether a person has been exposed to the virus that causes the disease.
- There are challenges in developing and implementing a validated and effective serological test for detecting COVID-19. It is a new virus, and little is known about the body's immune response to it. Further research is needed.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada's National Microbiology Laboratory is evaluating a range of commercially available tests for COVID-19.
- On March 18, the Minister of Health signed an Interim Order to expedite access to medical devices related to COVID-19 by health care providers. Health Canada is responsible for reviewing applications submitted under the Interim Order, including those for commercial serological tests, and authorizing medical devices that meet safety and effectiveness requirements.
- Only diagnostic tests authorized by Health Canada can be imported or sold in Canada. Unauthorized tests may produce inaccurate results, which may lead to misdiagnoses. Health Canada has confirmed that authorized COVID-19 tests are well supported by evidence that they will provide accurate and reliable results. As of April 9, 2020, Health Canada had not approved any serological tests.
- A serological test detects the presence of virus-specific antibodies that cause COVID-19 in the blood of patients and allows public health professionals to identify those who have been infected.
- The ability to screen for antibodies helps to better understand how the immune system responds to the virus that causes COVID-19 and serves as a tool to evaluate new vaccines and other treatments.
- European authorities have reported poor performance of rapid serological tests for the diagnosis of COVID-19 infections. The use of a diagnostic test that gives erroneous or inaccurate results may put individuals and Canada's population overall at risk. Canada ensures that serological tests are used appropriately in combination with other tools to diagnose infection.



If asked why Canada is not following the lead of the United Kingdom or Germany

- More research is needed before Canada makes decisions.
- Other respiratory viruses do not generally provide total immunity to people who have recovered from the disease.
- At this point, we do not know if people who have recovered will have immunity and how long this immunity can last, whether it is possible to get COVID-19 twice or whether the disease will be milder or more severe the second time.
- Canada will continue to work with its international partners to share information on measures and best practices to guide our domestic approach.

About Presymptomatic and Asymptomatic Transmission

- Now that more countries have recorded high numbers of cases and analyzed the methods by which the virus spreads, recent studies prove that infected people can transmit the virus even before they have symptoms. This is what we call presymptomatic transmission.
- Data also shows that some infected people can transmit the virus without ever having symptoms. This phenomenon is called asymptomatic transmission.
- Currently, we do not know to what extent presymptomatic and asymptomatic transmission plays a role in the spread of the epidemic, but we do know that this type of transmission occurs in people who have close contact or share a restricted physical environment with infected individuals.
- The main vectors of the global COVID-19 pandemic are individuals with visible symptoms, since coughing and respiratory droplets are the main ways the virus spreads. However, since the existence of asymptomatic transmission is now proven, it is important that every person, even those who do not feel sick, applies proven methods to prevent transmission.

Medicines and vaccines

- When a vaccine or drug is developed to prevent or treat COVID-19, we will take the appropriate action to ensure its accessibility to Canadians.
- Measures implemented include fast-tracking through the following initiatives:
 - scientific review of new drugs or vaccines through a priority review or a notice of compliance with conditions;
 - use of the Extraordinary Use of New Drugs pathway for making a promising new drug or vaccine available in order to protect the health of Canadians during an emergency;



- Canadian clinical trials for new vaccines, new or repurposed antivirals, or supportive therapies.
- Other measures include the:
 - Special Access Program for professionals treating patients with serious or life-threatening conditions when conventional therapies have failed or are unavailable;
 - importation of a new drug authorized for sale in the United States, Switzerland, or the European Union through the list of drugs for an urgent public health need.

Canadian hospitals join global drug trials

- COVID-19 is a global pandemic that requires a global solution.
- The participation of various countries, including Canada, in this unprecedented mega-trial of potential treatments for COVID-19 truly represents a new model of global collaboration.
- This global trial, coordinated by the World Health Organization, will test several possible drugs to treat COVID-19. Since all countries will be using the same experimental design, it will be possible to obtain more reliable results faster.
- As with all unproven treatments, there are risks and benefits. It is therefore preferable to use the potential treatments in a clinical trial.
- The Government of Canada, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, has invested nearly \$1 million in the Canadian component of this global trial. This investment is part of the government's \$275 million commitment to support medical research on the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Canada is home to some of the world's brightest and most qualified researchers who are working tirelessly to support the international fight against this pandemic. Up to 20 institutions across the country are expected to be invited to participate in the Canadian portion of this global trial.
- To advance COVID-19 vaccine research and development, the World Health Organization, together with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, is coordinating an international collaboration in which Canada is participating.

Experimental therapies

- No drug or health product with a therapeutic claim may be sold or marketed in Canada without first being approved by Health Canada as a safe, effective, and high-quality product. This approval process is initiated when the manufacturer of the drug or health product files an application for approval with Health Canada.



- To ensure that Canadians have access to health products effective against COVID-19 as quickly as possible, Health Canada is accelerating the review of all submissions related to this disease.
- At this time, no specific drug to treat or prevent COVID-19 has been approved. For drugs that show promise in treating COVID-19, the best way to have access to them is through clinical trials.
- Health Canada invites health care professionals who prescribe or offer experimental therapies to patients with COVID-19 to contact Health Canada to initiate a clinical trial.
- The Department continues to monitor the post-market safety and effectiveness of drugs and health products.

If pressed on accelerating access to treatment

- Health Canada recognizes that Canadians want timely access to promising new drugs and health products, especially when treatment options are limited.
- As a public health emergency measure, the Minister of Health has signed Interim Orders to allow accelerated access to medical devices and drugs related to COVID-19.
- Health Canada will continue to use all tools at its disposal to accelerate the supply of safe and effective COVID-19-related health products.

If pressed on off-label use

Additional Background: Some health care providers prescribe "off-label" medications for the treatment of COVID-19 symptoms. This means that they prescribe, for the treatment of COVID-19, medications that are authorized and indicated for the treatment of other health problems.

- In Canada, the decision of a health care professional to prescribe or use a particular drug for an approved or off-label indication falls within the routine practice of medicine, which falls under the jurisdiction of provincial and territorial professional regulatory authorities.
- While Health Canada regulates drugs in Canada, it is the responsibility of health care professionals to consider the information provided in the Canadian product monograph, on the labels of approved products, and from other reliable sources such as medical journals, reports and peer-reviewed studies, to ensure that the potential benefits of the drug outweigh its risks to individual patients.
- Off-label use may not be supported by the same level of scientific evidence as authorized use. An off-label prescription can be justified by a range of data, from rigorous clinical study data to anecdotal evidence without substantial scientific validation.
- Drug labels are designed to indicate authorized use and, therefore, may not provide all the information necessary for safe and effective off-label use. For drugs used off-label,



there may be less information about possible interactions with other drugs and other possible adverse effects associated with off-label use of the drug.

- It is illegal to promote, directly or indirectly, experimental therapies or the off-label use of authorized drugs.
- Health Canada encourages health care professionals to consider the use of off-label drugs for the treatment of COVID-19 in the context of a clinical trial so that data can be collected and used to inform future prescribing practices.

If pressed on clinical trials

- Clinical trials play a critical role in advancing research and evaluating investigational products to help address emerging health issues.
- The purpose of clinical trials is to determine whether the use of a drug or medical device is effective and safe for humans.
- Clinical trials require informed patient consent, monitoring and safeguards to ensure participants' safety.
- Clinical trials allow the health care community to systematically collect data about the effectiveness of treatments and any risks associated with them, so that they can inform treatment decisions for other patients.

Use of hydroxychloroquine (sulfate) and azithromycin for the treatment of COVID-19

- Canadians with COVID-19 and their families need access to safe and effective drugs and health products to treat and detect the disease.
- Preliminary data from some studies suggests that hydroxychloroquine, used alone or in combination with azithromycin, may be effective in reducing the viral load of patients with COVID-19 and treating respiratory tract infections caused by COVID-19.
- There is little evidence on the combined use of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin to treat COVID-19. Like all medications, their use is associated with certain proven risks.
- In Canada, the use of hydroxychloroquine or azithromycin has been approved in the treatment of certain diseases. However, physicians may also prescribe them off-label, depending on the needs of the patient and the severity of the disease, when they believe the potential benefits outweigh the drug's known risks.
 - Hydroxychloroquine is approved to treat lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and malaria.
 - Azithromycin is an antibiotic used to treat pneumonia and other bacterial infections.



- It is important to preserve access to these drugs for patients who need them for approved uses.
- Since the use of these drugs to treat COVID-19 is just beginning to be tested scientifically, Health Canada recommends that health professionals who wish to prescribe them to treat COVID-19 do so in a clinical trial.
- A clinical trial requires the informed consent of patients and allows the medical profession to systematically collect data on the treatment's risks and benefits.
- All clinical trials for the treatment of COVID-19 are reviewed on a priority basis. Companies, physicians, and researchers who want to undertake a clinical trial should contact Health Canada.

If pressed on the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile

- The Government of Canada has added hydroxychloroquine to the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS). The inventory will be used first for its approved applications, and then in clinical trials for the treatment of COVID-19.
- The addition of hydroxychloroquine to NESS will be phased in over several months to minimize impacts on its availability for approved applications.
- Provinces and territories can call upon the NESS in emergencies, such as responding to an infectious disease outbreak, natural disaster, or other public health incidents when their own resources are insufficient.
- The stockpile contains various items including medical devices, drugs, beds, and blankets.
- The NESS is intended to supplement provincial and territorial stocks when a rare or high-impact public health incident occurs.
- The NESS is not intended to replace provincial/territorial inventory or purchases. Provinces and territories must develop and maintain their own procurement capabilities.
- Immediately following the coronavirus outbreak in China in January, the Public Health Agency of Canada closely monitored the situation and assessed NESS's inventories to acquire the necessary supplies and be able to respond to a possible outbreak in the country.
- Supply is tightening all over the world. The federal government continues to work hard to get everything it needs as quickly as possible, working directly with all provinces and territories.



If pressed on the accessibility of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin

- Health Canada is closely monitoring stockpiles of substances that could potentially treat COVID-19 in Canada, including hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin.
- Four companies market hydroxychloroquine in Canada: Apotex Inc., JAMP Pharma Corporation, Mint Pharmaceuticals Inc. and Sanofi-Aventis Canada Inc. Health Canada has been informed that all four companies have experienced an increase in demand.
- Sixteen companies market azithromycin in Canada: Altamed Pharma, Angita Pharma Inc., Apotex Inc., Auro Pharma Inc., Dominion Pharmacal, JAMP Pharma Corporation, Laboratoire Riva Inc., Marcan Pharmaceuticals Inc., Pharmascience Inc., Pro Doc Limited, Sandoz Canada Incorporated, Sanis Health Inc., Sivem Pharmaceuticals ULC, Sterimax Inc., Teva Canada Incorporated and Pfizer Canada ULC. None of these companies report a shortage of azithromycin in Canada.

If pressed on Health Canada's actions to mitigate COVID-19 shortages

- Health Canada is closely monitoring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Canada's drug supply, including targeting the weakest links in supply chains to fill gaps and avoid shortages.
- The Department has also stepped up its monitoring efforts and consults regularly, sometimes daily, with the provinces and territories, the pharmaceutical industry, the health sector, and patient groups. Health Canada also works with other international regulatory agencies, including the European Medicines Agency, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration, and the World Health Organization, to share information on any global supply disruptions. This ongoing dialogue allows us to better detect shortages, prepare mitigation strategies, and respond in a coordinated manner.
- As part of the government-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government passed the *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act* on March 25, 2020, and the *Food and Drugs Act* was amended to allow Health Canada to implement more robust means to reduce and prevent shortages.
- On March 30, the Minister of Health signed an Interim Order authorizing exceptions on the importation and sale of drugs, medical devices and foods for special dietary use that are necessary to prevent or alleviate the effects of shortages related directly or indirectly to COVID-19.
- The Interim Order allows, on an exceptional basis, the importation of certain drugs that do not necessarily meet all the requirements of Canadian regulations, such as bilingual labelling, but are manufactured to standards equivalent to those applied in Canada, to maintain the supply of drugs in Canada and to protect the health of Canadians during this period.
- Only drugs listed on the *List of drugs for exceptional importation and sale* will be subject to the exceptional importation and sale provisions of the Interim Order. For the time



being, the only drugs that are eligible for inclusion on this list will be those that have been reported to have a Tier 3 shortage, such as hydroxychloroquine.

- Although no drugs are yet on the list, Health Canada will evaluate proposals from companies wishing to access Tier 3 shortage drugs, including hydroxychloroquine, under this new process, and will amend the list as required.
- Health Canada will continue to work with other federal government departments, provinces and territories, international partners, and industry to ensure that Canadians continue to have access to the drugs and medical devices they need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Medical supplies and devices

Canada's supply of PPE and medical supplies

- We are aware of the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies in Canada and are committed to doing whatever it takes to protect Canadians' health, especially front-line health care workers, from COVID-19.
- The Government of Canada is working with provincial and territorial governments to quickly assess the need for PPE (N95 masks, surgical masks, face shields, nitrile gloves, gowns, and other protective clothing) and medical supplies (disinfectant, respirators, swabs and testing kits).
- To meet these needs, we are purchasing large quantities of equipment and supplies, investing in COVID-19 screening, and working with Canadian companies to increase their manufacturing capacity.
- We have also received donations from national and international organizations.
- Canada strives to rapidly distribute PPE and medical supplies to the provinces and territories, according to an approach agreed upon by the federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of health.
- The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) also sends PPE and respirators from the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS) to provinces and territories upon request.
- Canada's NESS contains supplies that provinces and territories may request in emergency situations, such as infectious disease outbreaks. Its objective is to help provide additional support in times of crisis to complement provincial and territorial resources.



- The provinces and territories are responsible for preparing and maintaining their own procurement capabilities.

Regulatory measures to improve access to medical devices, including PPE

- In recent weeks, and in support of the government-wide response to COVID-19, we have taken the following actions.
 - Accelerated access to medical devices related to COVID-19, such as test kits.
 - Accelerated issuance of establishment and manufacturing licenses.
 - Permitted import and sale of unapproved medical devices in Canada, in accordance with certain requirements, to address shortages.
 - Simplified access to products that may not meet all current regulatory requirements, such as bilingual labels, for personal protective equipment (masks, gowns), swabs, and hand and surface disinfectants.
 - Amendments to the *Food and Drugs Act* and the *Patent Act* to support efforts to prevent and respond to shortages.

Health Canada will monitor and evaluate the safety, quality and efficacy of any product allowed to be imported and sold under these special measures.

Supply contracts to increase the quantity of supplies in Canada

- Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Public Services and Procurement Canada continue to mobilize Canadian industries to increase domestic production capacity, including transforming plants to produce equipment and supplies, including portable respirators, surgical masks, and rapid test kits.
- As a result of these efforts, the Government of Canada has signed supply contracts with Canadian companies including Thornhill Medical, Medicom and Spartan Bioscience.
- The government has also signed letters of intent with companies including Precision Biomonitoring, Fluid Energy Group Ltd., Irving Oil, Calko Group and Stanfield's to produce test kits, disinfectant and protective clothing, including masks and gowns.
- Canada Goose has received its Medical Device Establishment Licence from Health Canada. This will allow the company to retool its manufacturing facilities to produce gowns.
- Throughout this process, the PHAC and Health Canada have played a leading role in conducting technical reviews to ensure that products meet the Government of Canada's technical specifications for COVID-19, which are set out on Public Services and Procurement Canada's [Buy and Sell website](#).
- The Government of Canada has also awarded a contract to Amazon to manage the logistics of PPE and supply distribution to support the fight against COVID-19.



- Amazon will work directly with Canada Post to provide warehousing services and will use its existing delivery service providers, Canada Post and Purolator, to ship products to health authorities in all provinces and territories for use by front-line health care workers.

PPE Purchases and donations

- The PHAC verifies the medical supplies and personal protective equipment received by the Government of Canada, whether donated or purchased, to ensure compliance with the COVID-19 technical specifications set out on Public Services and Procurement Canada's Buy and Sell website.
- The verification process varies depending on the medical device. For example, acceptable alternatives to N95 masks, such as KN95 respirators, are visually inspected for design and manufacturing defects and tested to ensure that flow, pressure drop and penetration meet the requirements for filtration masks. Gowns are visually inspected and tested for impermeability.
- Since some of the supplies may not be known to our health care providers, those that meet the relevant technical specifications will be distributed to the provinces and territories with documentation confirming that the products meet the specifications and providing instructions for use.
- For example, supplies received from China may be labelled in Mandarin. To ensure timely distribution, the PHAC is not able to replace labels on all items. Therefore, provinces and territories are encouraged to follow the PHAC instructions that accompany the supplies, ensuring appropriate training of front-line health care workers.
- The KN95 mask is another example. The normal procedure for an N95 mask is to perform a fit test, but the KN95 mask cannot be tested in this manner, so the PHAC will request that provinces and territories perform a fit test. Health care workers may not be familiar with this process, so instructions will be provided to them.
- The Government of Canada is pleased to accept generous donations of PPE from international and national organizations, including the Jack Ma Foundation/Alibaba, Home Depot, Apple, CBC/Radio-Canada, Shell, AstraZeneca, and many others.
- We are pleased to see so many Canadians mobilizing to help those who need it most.

Government of Canada's coordinated response for the purchase of equipment and supplies

- The Government of Canada has taken a coordinated approach to distributing the necessary supplies and equipment across the country.



- **Public Services and Procurement Canada:** PSPC leverages existing supply agreements and contacts the national and international procurement communities to identify and purchase needed products.

The Department is asking all suppliers to come forward with products or services that they can offer in support of Canada's response.

- **Public Health Agency of Canada:** The PHAC is working with federal partners, provinces, and territories to determine the needs and requirements for our response to COVID-19. The Agency also oversees the National Emergency Strategic Stockpile of Canada that contains supplies that provinces and territories can request in emergency situations.
- **Health Canada:** As the regulator of health products, Health Canada is working to accelerate access to the products Canadians need to help limit the spread of COVID-19.

On March 18, the Minister of Health signed an Interim Order to provide accelerated access to medical devices related to COVID-19. Health Canada has also adopted an interim measure to facilitate access to certain products, including PPE.

Under the Interim Order, a medical device licence is required to sell and import high-risk medical devices into Canada.

Health Canada will review all submissions and applications for COVID-19 as quickly as possible while maintaining patient safety standards.

- **Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada:** ISED is responsible for Canada's Plan to Mobilize Industry to fight COVID-19, which includes new measures to directly support companies in rapidly increasing their production capacity or reorganizing their production lines to develop Canadian-made products that will contribute to the fight against COVID-19. On March 20, ISED launched a call to action for manufacturers and businesses.
- **National Research Council of Canada:** The NRC's Industrial Research Assistance Program is building on its existing relationships with thousands of the most innovative small and medium-sized enterprises to challenge the marketplace to find innovative solutions to address COVID-19.

Reuse of single-use medical devices

- Like other hospital practices, the purchase and use of reprocessed medical devices by health care facilities is the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments.



- Given the shortage of certain medical devices caused by COVID-19, Health Canada is working on guidelines for the cleaning and sterilization of single-use devices.
- The Government of Canada has taken additional emergency measures in recent weeks to facilitate access to the new COVID-19 diagnostic test kits as well as disinfectants, hand antiseptics, personal protective equipment and swabs for testing.

N95 masks—Decontamination and reuse

- N95 masks used by health care workers are labelled as single-use products.
- The Government of Canada, like many other countries, is examining ways to extend the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as N95 masks, through decontamination to help Canada meet its supply needs.
- The Government of Canada has asked the provinces and territories, as well as health care providers, to retain used N95 masks and store them in accordance with local biosafety standards and guidelines while it verifies the effectiveness of the decontamination processes.
- Health Canada has already authorized certain devices for the decontamination of N95 masks under the Interim Order respecting medical devices. Products and manufacturing processes must meet safety, quality, and efficacy requirements to protect the health and safety of Canadians.
- The Government of Canada has acquired decontamination equipment to increase provincial and territorial capacity to reprocess N95 masks if required.
- Other countries, including the United States, have adopted this approach.
- The Government of Canada is working hard to provide PPE and medical supplies to health care workers by making bulk purchases in collaboration with the provinces and territories, increasing domestic production capacity, and seeking alternatives and ways to extend product life.

About the Public Health Agency of Canada's purchase of decontamination equipment for the reprocessing of single-use N95 masks during the fight against COVID-19

- On April 15, 2020, the Government of Canada entered a contract with Stryker Canada for the purchase of 82 decontamination devices.
- These devices will provide a total additional national reprocessing capacity of approximately 275,500 N95 masks per week.
- These devices are the result of Canadian research and development efforts and are made in Canada.



- The Government of Canada continues to work closely with all provinces and territories to address their potential needs for additional decontamination and reprocessing capacity.
- The National Research Council of Canada has purchased 20 Clean Flow Mini medical health care devices to share with hospitals to study mask decontamination.

About Health Canada's considerations for the reprocessing of N95 single-use masks during the fight against COVID-19

- The Government of Canada recognizes that mask reprocessing is one possible solution that would provide an additional supply of masks for health care workers who depend on them for protection.
- Due to the risk of PPE shortages during the fight against COVID-19, the Government of Canada continues to work with manufacturers to identify alternative technologies to effectively decontaminate single-use N95 masks for safe reuse by front-line health care professionals.
- Decontamination is an acceptable way to make masks safe for reuse. Companies are required to provide evidence that their processes provide adequate mask decontamination for reuse.
- Health Canada has published a Notice informing manufacturers of the important regulatory provisions that they must take into account to demonstrate that their decontamination methods for single-use N95 masks meet key safety and effectiveness requirements.
- The Department also published a Notice containing important considerations for health care professionals, which provides further information on Health Canada's evidence requirements to ensure that products and manufacturing processes meet mandatory standards of safety, quality and efficacy.
- Manufacturers who wish to reprocess medical devices for use against COVID-19 can apply for expedited authorization under the Interim Order dated March 18, 2020. This is a simplified regulatory process to deal with the health crisis.
- Two approaches can be taken:
 - Companies can supply sterilization or decontamination devices or systems to health care facilities for the reprocessing of single-use N95 masks.
 - They can reprocess the single-use N95 masks themselves and redistribute them to health care institutions.



- Health care facilities that have sterilizers that allow them to internally reprocess N95 masks may conduct this activity without authorization from Health Canada. However, the Department strongly recommends that they use only technologies that it has authorized.
- The Government of Canada continues to communicate with the health care community and the provinces and territories to monitor PPE quantities and to learn about possible ways to reprocess N95 masks.
- Our goal is to find solutions quickly and effectively to meet the pressing need for safe and effective PPE in the health care environment.

Authorizations under the Interim Order respecting Medical Devices

- Health Canada has invited medical device companies with extensive experience in the manufacturing of decontamination and reprocessing equipment to submit applications for authorization of these technologies for the safe and effective reprocessing of N95 masks and other PPE. As it does for all products intended for use in connection with COVID-19, Health Canada is expediting the submission process for these products and making them its top priority.
- Under the Interim Order respecting Medical Devices ([link](#)), Health Canada has authorized the expansion of the intended use of sterilizers and the use of new devices for the reprocessing of N95 masks.
- A list of authorized devices is available [here](#) (search for "sterilizer" or "decontamination" in the "technology" column). This list will be updated regularly as new devices are authorized under the Interim Order.
- Health Canada will continue to monitor current international trends and evaluate the evidence supporting various decontamination and sterilization methods and strategies for the reprocessing of other PPE, such as single-use surgical masks, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

About our existing guidelines

- In May 2016, Health Canada released a [Notice](#) to industry regarding the reuse of single-use medical devices.
- Health Canada subjects companies that reprocess medical devices originally licensed and labelled for single use and that distribute them to health care facilities in Canada to the same requirements as manufacturers of new devices.



- Manufacturers of licensed sterilizers or decontamination devices each have their own guidelines that tell users how to use the device to decontaminate masks, including:
 - instructions for health care facilities
 - instructions for caregivers
 - an information sheet on the decontamination of N95 masks.
- Health Canada also published a Notice containing important considerations for health care professionals, which provides further information on Health Canada's evidence requirements to ensure that products and manufacturing processes meet mandatory standards of safety, quality and efficacy.

About the report to Canada's Chief Science Advisor: Working Group on reprocessing of N95 face masks

- Experts from the PHAC and Health Canada were among the members of the Working Group that reviewed the evidence available regarding the reprocessing and reuse of N95 face masks (also known as respirators or N95 respirators) in light of potential shortages of these devices.
- The Working Group conducted an accelerated review of mask reprocessing options using ultraviolet light, heat, and microwaves as well as chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide.
- The recommendations in this report are consistent with current plans and practices supported by the PHAC and Health Canada.
- Since the submission of the report, Health Canada has approved additional reprocessing technologies. The Department continues to rapidly assess all technologies related to COVID-19.

Legislative changes

Key messages regarding legislative changes

- To facilitate Canada's response to COVID-19, new legislative changes will provide the Minister of Health with new powers to:
 - make regulations that help prevent or address shortages of drugs and medical devices;
 - request additional information from companies that produce food, drugs, cosmetics or medical devices to assess the risks and benefits of new products and to confirm that they are safe for Canadians;
 - obtain authorization for third-party manufacturers to provide necessary patented inventions, such as a drug or medical device, to the extent required to combat this pandemic.



- These measures received Royal Assent on March 25, 2020, and came into effect immediately.
- Amendments to the *Food and Drugs Act* and the authority of the Commissioner of Patents to grant authorizations will remain in place until September 30, 2020.
- Health Canada is committed to taking action to continue to protect the health and safety of Canadians during this pandemic and will take appropriate measures, in collaboration with the provinces, territories and other stakeholders, to protect the supply of needed drugs and medical devices in Canada.

Compatibility of these changes with the *Protecting Canadians from Unsafe Drugs Act (Vanessa's Law)*

- These changes complement the powers granted by Vanessa's Law
 - by providing the authority to collect additional safety information to guide decisions about new products marketed in Canada or products already on the market;
 - by expanding the scope of the authorities to include other potential new products, including cosmetics and foods for special dietary use that may be required to address shortages during the pandemic.

Temporary exemptions for medical treatment under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act

- Many people with substance use disorders or chronic pain may have difficulty effectively applying the principles of physical distancing if no changes are made to prescription and dispensing practices. In these times of emergency, we must do everything we can to provide access to the medications these people need.
- Health Canada is working with the provinces and territories to take concrete action to enable patients and practitioners to reduce social interactions without limiting access to essential medicines.
- On March 19, 2020, Health Canada granted a six-month exemption for prescriptions for controlled substances (such as narcotics) under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and its regulations. This temporary exemption allows pharmacists to prescribe, sell or provide controlled substances in limited circumstances, or to transfer prescriptions for controlled substances.
- In accordance with the laws and regulations of the province or territory in which the pharmacist is licensed to practise, the exemption:
 - will allow pharmacists to extend or renew prescriptions;
 - will allow pharmacists to transfer prescriptions to other pharmacists;
 - will allow pharmacy employees to deliver controlled substances to a patient's home or other place where the patient is located.



- To facilitate physical distancing and reduce the strain on emergency rooms and health care professionals across Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic, the temporary exemption also allows prescribers, including nurse practitioners, to verbally authorize (e.g., by telephone) the extension or renewal of a prescription.
- The exemption will be in effect until September 30, 2020, but may be extended or shortened by Health Canada if necessary.
- Amendments to legislation and regulations in some provinces and territories may be required to allow pharmacists and nurse practitioners to engage in these new activities. Health Canada recommends that you contact a pharmacist or the regulatory body in your province or territory to find out if and when these services will be available in your area.
- The Government of Canada will continue to work with provincial and territorial partners to ensure that this exemption is implemented effectively, and to assess any other factors that may affect the ability of Canadians to access controlled substances for medical purposes during the pandemic.
- Health Canada issued similar exemptions during the 2020 winter storm in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Interim Order Respecting Drugs, Medical Devices and Foods for a Special Dietary Purpose in Relation to COVID-19

- The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on Canadians and the health care system. Ensuring that the Government of Canada can effectively respond to the needs of those affected is essential.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minister of Health has signed an Interim Order to help prevent and address shortages of drugs, medical devices and special dietary foods resulting directly or indirectly from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Once it comes into force, the Order will authorize the importation and sale of products that are not licensed in Canada, subject to certain requirements.
- As with all drugs and medical devices, Health Canada will assess and monitor the safety, security, quality, and efficacy of all products that may be imported and sold under the Interim Order. Manufacturers of drugs and medical devices will be required to meet strict monitoring requirements.
- The Interim Order will also require companies that manufacture and import medical devices deemed essential during the COVID-19 pandemic to report existing or anticipated shortages, as is currently the case with drugs. This will allow health system officials to better prepare and redistribute materials as needed to provide Canadians with continued access to these products.



- The Interim Order will also expedite the introduction of certain hard surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers to the market.
- Taken together, these measures will improve access to the drugs, medical devices, and special dietary foods that Canadians need to stay healthy and safe, and help patients recover.

Interim Order Respecting Medical Devices Related to COVID-19

- Diagnosis is essential to slow and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Canada.
- As an emergency public health measure, the Minister of Health has signed an Interim Order to allow accelerated access to medical devices related to COVID-19.
- As a result of the Interim Order, two new diagnostic tests will now be available in Canada:
 - the Cobas SARS-CoV-2 diagnostic test from Roche Molecular Systems Inc.;
 - the TaqPath™ COVID-19 Combo Kit from Thermo Fisher Scientific.
- For the Government of Canada, an Interim Order is one of the fastest mechanisms to make health products required to respond to major public health emergencies available.

If pressed on the U.S. directive to allow the use of unlicensed health products

- Health Canada will continue to use all tools at its disposal to accelerate the procurement of COVID-19-related health products. However, Health Canada does not provide blanket approval for unlicensed drugs or devices. We will inform Canadians of new information as it becomes available.
- The Interim Order will also ensure that other medical devices related to COVID-19 will be available to treat, mitigate or prevent the disease as needed.

If pressed on cost recovery

- To remove any barriers for manufacturers at this time of great public health need, Health Canada will waive the processing fees set out in this Interim Order for medical devices related to COVID-19.

Border measures

- The Government of Canada continues to implement place border measures to limit the introduction and spread of COVID-19.
- The Government of Canada has multiple systems in place to prepare for, detect and limit the spread of infectious diseases in Canada, including COVID-19.
- The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) is working closely with the Public Health Agency of Canada to help prevent the domestic spread of the novel coronavirus 2019 at all of Canada's international ports of entry.



- If additional measures are required at the Canadian border to prevent the spread of serious communicable diseases in Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada must notify the CBSA.
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents and persons registered as Indians under the *Indian Act* continue to enter Canada by right and are subject to the entry controls implemented to address COVID-19.
- To protect Canadians and ease the burden that non-essential travellers could place on our health care system and its front-line workers, the CBSA has implemented new travel restrictions at all ports of entry and for all modes of transportation: land, marine, air and rail.
- A travel ban is currently in place for most people entering Canada*, including:
 - all foreign nationals entering Canada by air;
 - all travellers arriving from the United States, by any mode, for tourism or recreation;
 - foreign nationals entering Canada from a foreign country other than the U.S., with a few exceptions, including temporary foreign workers and international students; and
 - foreign nationals entering from the United States with signs or symptoms of respiratory illness.

**Certain exemptions to the travel ban are outlined in the Orders in Council.*

- Canada and the U.S. also have a reciprocal agreement to reject all refugee claimants. Exceptions may be made in special circumstances, such as in the case of an unaccompanied minor.
- All persons entering Canada—regardless of their country of origin and by whatever mode of entry—are REQUIRED to self-isolate for 14 days.
- There are exemptions to mandatory self-isolation to ensure the continuity of critical infrastructure, essential services and economic supply chains between Canada and the United States. Workers who are essential to our economy and infrastructure will be allowed to enter Canada, including truck drivers, firefighters, and medical workers.
- Cross-border supply chains are essential to keep goods moving, including food and medical supplies for all Canadians. The CBSA is working with other federal partners to share information with trade stakeholders and reassure them that commercial traffic is not impeded.

ArriveCAN mobile application

- In accordance with the emergency orders under the *Quarantine Act*, any person entering Canada must quarantine (self-isolate) or isolate themselves for 14 days.



- To ensure compliance with the orders, all travellers entering Canada are required, upon arrival in Canada, to provide the Government of Canada with essential contact information, report their symptoms and confirm that a quarantine plan has been prepared.
- Until now, this information has been collected on a hard copy or online form when travellers arrive in Canada.
- The ArriveCAN application, launched during the week of April 29, is an alternative to paper forms that can speed up the entry process at the Canadian border. Travellers are encouraged to use it.
- With ArriveCAN, travellers can enter their information quickly, easily, and securely into a scanned version of the coronavirus form as soon as they arrive in Canada.
- Electronic reporting enhances the protection of travellers and border and quarantine officers by reducing physical contact.
- The application allows you to enter the same information as requested on the paper and online coronavirus form.
- Additional information is now requested from the traveller, such as flight or border crossing information, whether they have symptoms of COVID-19 and whether they have a quarantine plan in place.
- The personal information collected on the paper or online form or through the application by border and quarantine officers will allow the Public Health Agency of Canada to verify that travellers are complying with the Quarantine Act. The information will be shared with the provinces and territories and law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance with the Order.
- Protecting the privacy of Canadians' personal information is a priority for the Government of Canada, and any tool used to collect personal information is subject to rigorous review for privacy issues.
- Personal information is used to administer and enforce *Order No. 2 to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in Canada (mandatory isolation)*, under the Quarantine Act or the Department of Health Act. Personal information may be used or disclosed for the following purposes: (1) to monitor or verify compliance with the mandatory self-isolation order, (2) to inform travellers and help them comply with the self-isolation order, and (3) to support public health follow-up activities.
- Under the *Privacy Act* and its regulations, the CBSA and the PHAC are required to retain the personal information entrusted to them. Personal information used for administrative purposes, such as that collected through the application, is retained for a minimum of two years from the date of its last use.



- The ArriveCAN application supports Canada's digital strategy for service delivery to Canadians and government greening efforts.

Restrictions on non-essential travel (Canada–U.S.)

- On March 18, 2020, the governments of Canada and the United States announced that both countries would implement collaborative and reciprocal measures to suspend non-essential travel along the Canada–U.S. border in response to the spread of COVID-19.
- As of 12:01 a.m. EDT on March 21, there is a temporary 30-day restriction on all non-essential travel across the Canada–U.S. border. This initial 30-day period may be renewed.
- All optional or discretionary travel, including tourism and recreation, is subject to these measures. Travel by healthy individuals who must cross the border for work or other essential reasons, such as medical care, will continue.
- The following are examples of travel for essential reasons:
 - crossing the border to go to work or school;
 - economic services and supply chains;
 - support for critical infrastructure;
 - health (immediate medical care), safety and security;
 - purchase of essential goods such as medication or goods needed to ensure the health and safety of an individual or family;
 - other activities deemed essential at the discretion of the Border Services Officer.
- Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada and persons registered under the *Indian Act* may enter the country by right. They will receive a Public Health Agency of Canada fact sheet advising travellers that they are required to self-isolate for 14 days from the day they enter Canada.

Canada will also implement measures at airports to:

- strengthen health checks;
- strengthen the presence to conduct more health checks and public interventions;
- increase the number of signs in arrival areas to encourage travellers to follow the latest public health guidelines;
- prevent all travellers who show symptoms of COVID-19, regardless of citizenship, from boarding international flights to Canada;
 - air carriers will subject all travellers to a basic health screening in accordance with Public Health Agency of Canada guidelines.
- These measures are intended to make information easily accessible and increase awareness among all travellers of the steps they should take if they develop symptoms of COVID-19. In addition, we continue to advise travellers, regardless of where they have travelled, to monitor their health status for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.



- We continue to monitor and assess the risk associated with coronavirus disease (COVID-19) worldwide. To keep pace as the situation evolves, our response measures are adapted and improved based on the global risk assessment. This includes updating our travel health notices for travellers with respect to increases in risk levels.

Order No. 10—Mandatory isolation

- Ensuring the health and safety of Canadians is the Government of Canada's top priority. We are taking unprecedented action to address the COVID-19 outbreak. One of these measures is to continually assess the risks so that we can adapt our response accordingly.
- The Government of Canada's Interim Order under the *Quarantine Act* already requires people entering Canada by air, land, or sea to self-isolate for 14 days if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or to self-quarantine for 14 days if they are asymptomatic in order to limit the spread of the disease.
- An updated Order will be issued to clarify terminology. It is based on new scientific evidence that asymptomatic individuals can transmit the virus.
- Under the updated Order in Council, travellers arriving in Canada, whether or not they have symptoms, will not be able to self-isolate or quarantine (as appropriate) in a location where they would be in contact with vulnerable people, such as adults 65 years of age or older or people with pre-existing medical conditions.
- In addition, each traveller will need to confirm that they can self-isolate or quarantine in a suitable location where they will have access to basic necessities such as food and medication. Travellers will need to make arrangements for their self-isolation or quarantine location before arriving in Canada. Those who do not have a suitable place to self-isolate or quarantine will have to go to a place designated by the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. These are new criteria for asymptomatic travellers.
- Compliance with the Order is mandatory for anyone arriving in Canada on or after April 15, 2020.
- Travellers who are symptomatic and do not have private transportation or a suitable location for isolation will be required to self-isolate for 14 days in a place designated by the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada.
- Asymptomatic travellers are still at risk of infecting others and will be required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering (i.e., made to completely cover the nose and mouth and tightly fitted to the face, held in place by ties behind the ears or cords behind the head and neck) while en route to their destination where they will be quarantined for 14 days and will be required to follow the directions of the public health authority designated by the screening officer or quarantine officer if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19. A mask is provided if they do not have one.



- Symptomatic travellers are also required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering while en route to their final destination where they will be required to self-isolate, or whenever they cannot physically stay more than 2 metres away from others.
- Asymptomatic travellers who do not have a suitable quarantine location are subject to the same requirements as symptomatic travellers and must travel to a location designated by the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada.
- Certain people who regularly cross the border to move goods and provide essential services, as well as persons who receive or provide other essential services to Canadians, are exempt from the quarantine requirement as long as they are asymptomatic (i.e., they do not show any symptoms of COVID-19).
- Persons so exempted must wear a non-medical mask or face covering during the journey to their final destination. Upon arrival at their destination, exempted persons must practise physical distancing, consider wearing a mask or other face covering when they cannot practise physical distancing, and stay more than 2 metres away from others, monitor their symptoms, remain in their place of residence as much as possible and follow the instructions of the local public health authority if they feel ill.
- We based this decision on the most recent scientific evidence available and on discussions we have had with the provinces and territories.
- These additional measures will help contain the outbreak and stop the spread of COVID-19 in Canada.
- They will also help protect the elderly and people with pre-existing medical conditions, who are at greater risk of developing serious complications from COVID-19.
- The Government of Canada will continue to work closely with its regional, provincial, territorial, and international partners to limit the introduction of COVID-19.

Enforcement:

- Spot checks will be conducted by the Government of Canada to ensure compliance.
- Penalties for non-compliance with this Order include a fine not exceeding \$750,000 or imprisonment for six months, or both.
- Any person who creates a threat of imminent death or serious harm to another person through a wilful or negligent contravention of the *Quarantine Act* is liable to a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or imprisonment for up to three years, or both.
- Amendments are currently being made to *Quarantine Act* offences under the Contraventions Regulation. These will be flagged as offences punishable by fines.



- Amounts could range from \$75 to \$1000. The amount of a ticket for a young person is \$100.

Designated quarantine facilities:

- The Chief Public Health Officer has designated quarantine facilities, such as hotels, across the country, including in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal.
- Under Section 7 of the *Quarantine Act*, the Chief Public Health Officer may designate any place in Canada as a quarantine facility to protect the health of Canadians if she considers it necessary.

Order No. 11—Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Prohibition of Entry into Canada from the United States)

- Foreign nationals who may enter Canada include temporary foreign workers, certain students, people delivering emergency medical supplies, and certain classes of refugee claimants, including those who arrive in Canada at a land port of entry and can make a claim for refugee protection under the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA).
- All foreign nationals authorized to enter Canada must meet the requirements of Interim Orders made under the *Quarantine Act*, including mandatory quarantining for a period of 14 days after entry into Canada, unless they have been granted a specific exemption. They must also comply with provincial and territorial Interim Orders and local health directives.
- Foreign nationals are generally not allowed to enter Canada for optional or elective reasons or if they have symptoms of COVID-19 coronavirus disease.
- Temporary foreign workers are necessary to ensure the resilience of our food industry and supply so that all Canadians have access to food and essential products during this pandemic period.
- The *Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Prohibition on Entry into Canada from the United States)* is in effect from April 22 to May 21, 2020.
- Amendments to this Order will ensure that Canada continues to meet its international obligations with respect to refugees and refugee claimants.
- These measures will help prevent the spread of the disease in Canada while ensuring that essential travel and supply chains are not disrupted.

About foreign nationals who wish to apply for refugee protection

- Foreign nationals who enter Canada between official ports of entry to file a refugee claim will still be returned to the United States, a designated safe third country.



- The entry ban will not apply to any foreign national from the United States who arrives in Canada at an official land port of entry **and meets** the criteria for an exemption from the STCA, whether or not they are symptomatic. The foreign national will then be able to file a claim for refugee protection.
- Applicants who are unable to meet Canada's quarantine/isolation requirements will be directed to a federally operated facility.

About the enforcement of this Order

- Failure to comply with this Order is an offence under the *Quarantine Act*.
- Maximum penalties include a fine of up to \$750,000 or six months' imprisonment, or both. In addition, any person who willfully or recklessly contravenes the Act or its regulations, exposes another person to an imminent danger of death or injury, could be fined up to \$1,000,000 or imprisonment for a term of up to three years, or both.
- In addition, amendments have been made to the *Contraventions Regulations*, which make failure to comply with specific requirements under the *Quarantine Act* a contravention that may result in a ticket being issued.
- This ticket is associated with a fine ranging from \$275 to \$1,000. For young offenders, the fine is \$100.

About essential travel to Canada by foreign nationals via the United States

- Essential travel will continue without restriction. Both governments recognize the importance of maintaining vital supply chains between the two countries. These supply chains ensure that people on both sides of the border have access to food, fuel, and essential medicines.

If pressed

The foreign nationals listed below may enter Canada:

- persons who arrive in Canada at an official land port of entry and can make a claim for refugee protection under the Safe Third Country Agreement;
- persons registered as Indians within the meaning of the *Indian Act*;
- protected persons.

In addition, as long as they are seeking entry to Canada for reasons that are not discretionary or optional and do not show symptoms of COVID-19, foreign nationals in the following categories may also enter Canada.

The foreign nationals in these categories must still prove that they are travelling to Canada for essential reasons and must be asymptomatic:



- holders of a valid work permit or an application for a work permit approved under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*;
- holders of a valid study permit approved under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* before March 18, 2020;
- persons who are eligible to work in Canada as students under Section 186 (p) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations* in a health field;
- persons whose application for permanent residence was approved under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* before March 18, 2020;
- immediate family members of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident;
- persons authorized by consular services to enter Canada for the purpose of family reunification (immediate family);
- members of the crew of a conveyance (e.g., air, sea) or persons working on board a ship;
- diplomats;
- persons invited by Canada to participate in efforts to combat COVID-19;
- persons on board a military flight or other persons supporting the Canadian military forces;
- protected persons;
- French citizens who reside in Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon and who have stayed only in Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, the United States or Canada during the 14-day period preceding the day of their arrival in Canada;
- persons whose presence in Canada is in the national interest of public safety and emergency preparedness;
- persons who provide essential services or who are essential to the movement of goods, such as truck drivers and marine carriers;
- emergency service workers;
- licensed health care professionals with proof of employment in Canada;
- persons seeking entry to Canada to deliver medically necessary equipment or instruments or to service or repair them;
- persons entering Canada to make medical deliveries of cells, blood and blood products, tissues, organs or other similar parts of the human body that are necessary for the care of patients in Canada;
- persons who, in the opinion of the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, do not pose a serious danger to public health.

Health check of Canadian travellers to Canada

- As part of Canada's strengthened border measures to limit the introduction of new cases of COVID-19 and the spread of the disease, airlines will conduct a health check of all travellers before they board a plane bound for Canada.
- The health check procedures are based on advice from the Public Health Agency of Canada, in accordance with the World Health Organization recommendations.



- Airline personnel will check travellers for the following symptoms:
 - fever;
 - cough;
 - difficulty breathing.
- If an airline notices that a traveller is showing symptoms, or if the traveller answers yes to any of the questions asked during the health check, the airline will deny boarding for a period of 14 days or until the traveller presents a medical certificate confirming that their symptoms are not related to COVID-19.
- Travellers who are denied boarding will receive further instructions and guidance to follow the recommendations of local public health authorities. These travellers will also be referred to the appropriate consular services.
- These measures will help protect the health of all Canadians.

Regarding the health check

- Airline personnel will be instructed to maintain distance between themselves and travellers at all times and to encourage travellers to do the same.
- Airline staff will check travellers for symptoms of COVID-19 and ask all travellers if they have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
- Airline staff will also ask travellers if they have been denied boarding in the last 14 days for medical reasons related to COVID-19.
- Travellers can provide a medical certificate stating that their symptoms are not related to COVID-19.
- These measures apply to travellers, not crew members.

Regarding enforcement

- Any traveller who provides false or misleading answers about their health during a health check could be subject to a fine of up to \$5,000 under the *Aeronautics Act*.

When you arrive in Canada

- All travellers found to be symptomatic during the flight are met by border services officers upon arrival at a Canadian airport. The officers take care to keep them away from other passengers and escort them to public health personnel, who take care of them.



- Everyone arriving in Canada at an air, land, sea, or rail border will be asked what the purpose of their visit is and if they feel sick or unwell. The border services officer may ask additional questions to determine whether or not the trip is essential.
- CBSA officers will observe visible signs of illness and will redirect any traveller they suspect is ill to the Public Health Agency of Canada for further medical examination, regardless of the traveller's response to health screening questions.
- All travellers, regardless of their country of origin and in all modes of entry, are assessed upon arrival in Canada. Entry screening is an important public health tool in times of uncertainty and is part of a multi-layered government response strategy.
- CBSA officers remain vigilant and are highly trained to identify travellers seeking to enter Canada who may pose a health and safety risk.
- Border services officers provide symptomatic travellers with a kit that includes a surgical mask and instructions on its use.
- These measures are in addition to the routine traveller screening procedures already in place to prepare for, detect and respond to the spread of serious infectious diseases into and within Canada.
- The following questions are now asked by all border services officers at the primary inspection line at all air, land, rail, and marine ports of entry:
 - "Do you have a cough or difficulty breathing, or do you feel feverish?";
 - "I recognize that I/we must self-isolate for 14 days to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19."
- CBSA officers not only question travellers about their health status; they are also trained to observe visible signs of illness and will redirect any traveller they suspect is ill, regardless of the traveller's response to the health screening question.
- Travellers with COVID-19 symptoms are referred to staff of the Public Health Agency of Canada for further investigation.
- These travellers receive a kit including a mask and instructions, and a fact sheet on mandatory self-isolation.
- All travellers entering Canada receive a fact sheet from the Public Health Agency of Canada asking them to self-isolate for 14 days. Symptomatic travellers receive a red sheet, and asymptomatic travellers receive a green sheet.

Travel health notices

- The Public Health Agency of Canada issues travel health notices to inform Canadians that there may be an increased or unexpected health risk in a country or region outside Canada.
- Travel health notices also provide information on precautions to take to reduce risks.



- The following points are considered when adding countries or areas to the list of regions affected by COVID-19:
 - The disease has spread to many people in the community (multiple clusters—not all cases are in a defined context, such as a household).
 - Evidence of geographic spread.
 - Possibility of linking cases to an exposure (i.e., to another case due to travel to a country where COVID-19 continues to spread).
- The list of areas affected by COVID-19 at Canada.ca/coronavirus-disease includes all countries with travel health notices regarding COVID-19.

Cottage season and COVID-19

- Public health recommendations continue to change, but that is because the situation is changing rapidly and we are learning new things about COVID-19 every day.
- Based on the available evidence, we are asking Canadians to avoid any non-essential travel to limit the spread of COVID-19, especially in small and rural communities where health systems may be easily overwhelmed.
- For this reason, we are asking everyone to stay away from cottages, campgrounds, and vacation properties during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Unless the property is your primary residence or is in the same community as your primary residence, you should wait until the situation in Canada changes before going there.
 - If you get sick, you may not be able to get the help you need. If you stop on the way to get gas or groceries, your risk of exposure increases and if you are asymptomatic, you could spread the virus to others.
 - An influx of people into a small community can also threaten the supply of food and other essential supplies for residents.
 - If you need to go to your cottage for insurance reasons, you should only make one round trip and go straight home.
 - All Canadians must continue to do everything possible to flatten the curve and ensure the health of our friends and families. This includes staying home.