Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Care Instructions

Overview

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a virus. It can cause:

- fever
- cough
- trouble breathing
- other flu-like symptoms

Most people have only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. But people are who very sick may need care in a hospital. In severe cases, COVID-19 can cause pneumonia, make it hard to breathe without help, and can even cause death.

How does it spread?

This virus spreads person-to-person through droplets from coughing and sneezing. It may also spread by touching something that has the virus on it, such as a doorknob or a tabletop, and then touching your face.

How is it diagnosed?

The virus is diagnosed with a test that uses a swab of fluid from your nose or throat or sometimes uses sputum (phlegm) from the lungs. Other tests may be done, such as blood tests and CT scans of the lungs. But even if you don't have a test, you may be told you probably have the virus based on your symptoms and history.

Is there medicine for COVID-19?

There is no medicine to fight the virus. If you have mild symptoms, you can care for yourself at home. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for a fever or pain, if it's safe for you. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you're not sure. Treatment in the hospital for more serious cases includes support, such as oxygen and help with breathing.

What should I do if I have COVID-19 or have been exposed?

If you've been diagnosed with COVID-19 or think you've been exposed to the virus, you must take steps to stop it from spreading to others. You will be told to isolate yourself at home. This means you need to stay home and away from other people. For information on when it's safe to come out of isolation, go to ahs.ca/covid, ask your doctor, or call Health Link at 811.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and keep all your healthcare appointments, and call your doctor or Health Link at 811 if you're having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

Where can I learn more?

You can find the latest information about COVID-19 from these sources:
- Alberta Health
- Alberta Health Services
- Government of Canada

How can I care for myself at home?

- Be safe with medicines. Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor or Health Link at 811 if you think you're having a problem with your medicine.
- Stay home. Don't go to school, work, or public places. And don't use public transportation (such as the bus or train). Leave your home only if you need to get medical care. But call your doctor's office first so they know you're coming, and wear a face mask when you go.
- Wear a face mask if you're sick and are around other people. It can help stop the virus from spreading when you cough or sneeze.
- Limit contact with people in your home. If possible, stay in a separate bedroom and use a separate washroom from everyone else in your home.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw it in the trash right away.
- Wash your hands often, especially after you cough or sneeze. Use soap and water, and scrub for at least 20 seconds. If you don't have soap and water at the time, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Don't share personal household items. These include bedding, towels, cups, and eating utensils.
- Clean and disinfect your home every day. Use household cleaners and disinfectant wipes or sprays. Take special care to clean things that you grab with your hands. These include doorknobs, remote controls, phones, and handles on your refrigerator and microwave. And don't forget countertops, tabletops, washrooms, and computer keyboards.
- Follow the advice you've been given about when it's safe to leave isolation. If you're not sure, call Health Link at 811.

When should I call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have severe trouble breathing or severe chest pain.
- You are very confused or not thinking clearly.
- You pass out (lose consciousness).

Call your doctor or Health Link at 811 now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new or worse trouble breathing.
- You have severe dehydration. Symptoms of dehydration include:
  - having a very dry mouth
  - passing only a little urine
  - feeling very light-headed
- Your symptoms are getting worse.
- You start getting better and then get worse.

If you have a high risk of having been exposed to this virus, call Health Link at 811 now if you get symptoms such as:

- shortness of breath
- fever
- cough
- sore throat
- runny nose

Whether you have symptoms or not, call your doctor's office **before** you go. If you have symptoms, make sure you wear a face mask when you go to the doctor to stop the virus from spreading.