

COVID-19 Update

For more information:
Canada.ca/coronavirus

Information for Indigenous communities:
Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous



INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA – Ontario Region

March 18, 2021

March 11th was recently designated as a National Day of Observance to honour those we have lost to COVID-19, and those they left behind. We also want to recognize all public health workers and pandemic team members who have been working tirelessly over the last year. Their workload has been immense and often involves many long hours. We urge you to acknowledge their invaluable contributions to your communities they serve.

As we enter year two of the pandemic, we want to thank all of you for your continuing efforts to keep your communities safe. Please keep in mind that you can continue to access additional public health support to respond to COVID-19: Accessing [additional public health support](#) for First Nations and Inuit communities during COVID-19.

We also want to highlight mental health resources available to you and your communities. The pandemic has taken a toll on each of us in different ways, and poses challenges that can be overwhelming. Encourage your community members to seek help when they need it. A toll-free line for emotional distress is included later in this update, and there are a number of [longer-term resources available](#) that you can share. No one has to battle alone.

Garry Best, Regional Executive and Anne Scotton, Regional Director General

Importance of maintaining Public Health Measures

As Variants of Concern (VOCs) continue to spread in Ontario, it remains vital to continue following public health measures to prevent their spread. Because VOCs spread the same way as the “original” virus, the same actions can be effective. These include avoiding close contact with anyone outside of your household, wearing a good fitting 3-ply mask in indoor public spaces, maintaining physical distancing, and frequent hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs.

Anyone with even a very mild symptom of COVID-19 should stay away from others and get tested. We know from what we have learned that often people have such a mild symptom that they think it can't be due to COVID-19! By the time they get tested, they have exposed other people. Reminding people to get tested and stay home, even when they have very mild symptoms, is a key message to continue to communicate.

Even after being vaccinated, people should continue to practice public health measures. Until enough people are vaccinated, the virus will continue to circulate and can cause severe illness.

COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOCs)

Variants are viruses that have changed or mutated, and are common with coronaviruses. These strains are Variants of Concern (VOC) because they spread more easily than other strains and at least one variant can cause more severe disease than the original variants. In Ontario, VOCs are spreading and now account for about 40 percent of all COVID-19 infections, with some regions more affected than others. The spread of VOCs is expected to continue to increase if people do not follow strict public health measures. For this reason, it remains critical that people limit their interactions with others.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The demand for PPE has surged across Canada to help limit the spread of COVID-19. These include PPE such as medical masks, N95 respirators, gloves and gowns. PPE is available through Indigenous Services Canada and Indigenous Affairs Ontario. A [pre-order form](#) with completion instructions is available.

COVID-19 Vaccines for Ontario

- **58,202** Daily doses administered
- **1,301,334** Total doses administered
- **290,659** People fully vaccinated

* All data reflects total from 6 p.m. the previous day

The [Vaccine Community Innovation Challenge](#) encourages you to promote vaccine confidence in your communities. Submit your proposals for innovative campaigns. Twenty finalists will receive \$25,000 each to create and implement their campaign. At the end of the campaign, one winner will receive a grand prize of \$100,000. The deadline to submit a proposal is April 9, 2021, at 3 pm EST.

Vaccine misinformation

We understand that some inaccurate information has been circulating to certain Indigenous communities about the vaccine that includes false and distorted information about potential side effects. The spread of misinformation can have real consequences and can affect people's behaviours and decision-making.

It is important to obtain information from trusted sources. These sources include federal, provincial and territorial health authorities, community health centres, nursing stations, or local healthcare providers. Please consider the source of information before spreading or sharing articles or facts.

Vaccination is a choice. Vaccines used in Canada must be approved by Health Canada and the COVID-19 vaccine is held to the same safety standards as other vaccines to make sure it is safe and effective.

[Learn more about COVID-19 vaccines](#)

[Information on COVID-19 Fraud and Scams](#)

Mental health resources

It has been a full year since COVID-19 changed the world as we knew it. While we have shown incredible resiliency in the face of adversity, many are struggling with the toll taken by the pandemic. The [Hope for Wellness Helpline](#) offers immediate mental health counselling and crisis intervention to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Call the toll-free Help Line at 1-855-242-3310, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or use their chat function to connect with a counsellor.

COVID-19 Cases

*As of March 17, 2021, @ 6:00 p.m.

- **1,240** confirmed in-community
- **13** deaths
- **147** active case on reserve
- **1093** resolved
- **13** communities with active cases (88%) reported to ON region

Fraudulent COVID-19 vaccine supplies

Health Canada (HC) recently began to receive signals of individuals and private entities claiming to have access to COVID-19 vaccines for sale. At the time, the targets of what HC now knows to be fraudulent emails were provincial and territorial governments. Unfortunately, this activity is continuing and the list of recipients has expanded to include stakeholder groups and Indigenous communities.

HC continues to work with vaccine manufacturers, importers and law enforcement to investigate these activities. In the meantime, as HC continues to monitor for fraudulent activity, you are encouraged to report any offers of sale that appear suspicious (e.g. unapproved product, high volumes, short decision-making timelines).

Should you, or anyone else in your community have information to share with Health Canada, please engage the Health Product Compliance Directorate, either by contacting Linsey Hollett at Linsey.Hollett@canada.ca or by [providing information online](#).

New COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Canada

On March 5, 2021, Health Canada approved the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine; the fourth vaccination to help prevent the spread of the virus. It is approved for people who are 18 years of age and over.

This is the first COVID-19 vaccine that only requires a single dose to build a robust immune response and is 66 percent effective in preventing symptomatic COVID-19 disease beginning 2 weeks after vaccination. This 14-day period to build immunity means that if someone is exposed to the virus in the first couple of weeks after immunization, they would not be protected and could still get sick. This is why it remains critical to follow the public health measures, even after receiving your vaccination.

The temporary side effects that followed vaccine administration in clinical trials were mild or moderate. They included things like pain at the site of injection, body chills, feeling tired and feeling feverish. Contact your doctor or healthcare provider if the redness or tenderness where you got the shot gets worse after 24 hours, or if your side effects are worrying you or do not seem to be going away after a few days.

Please visit our [Portal](#) for NEW communications resources regarding COVID-19.



Please feel free to contact the FNIHB Ontario COVID-19 generic inbox: sac.covid-19fnihbontario.isc@canada.ca if you or your community member have any information needs.