



For more information:  
[Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus)

Information for Indigenous communities:  
[Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous)

# COVID-19 UPDATE

## INFORMATION: CONFIRMATION OF CASES AND CONTACT TRACING

### What happens when Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is made aware of a confirmed case of COVID-19?

- Every community is unique, and public health systems vary across the province and territories. ISC has worked closely with First Nations communities, as well as provincial/territorial and regional/local public health authorities, to support planning, preparedness and response activities for COVID-19. When ISC is made aware of a laboratory-confirmed, positive case of COVID-19 in a community, ISC officials (which includes doctors, nurses, and other public health professionals), work closely with the provincial/territorial and regional/local public health authorities to ensure that cases are being managed appropriately.
- Next steps would be guided by the community's emergency pandemic plan and local public health protocols. In general, ISC priorities would include:
  - Ensuring that the affected individual has been informed of their status and has been informed of the appropriate steps to take (e.g. isolation at home), and has access to medical care as needed.
  - Outreach to the Chief or other community leader(s) to inform them that there is a confirmed case in their community without disclosing personal information. This allows the Chief and other community leaders, along with health experts to, take action as required according to their own protocols or emergency pandemic plan. ISC officials will also discuss what other support the community may need at this time.
- ISC works to ensure that appropriate health care is available for affected individuals and works with the community to identify any additional support that may be required.
- ISC also works with health experts to implement immediate measures to reduce the chances of further spread, including contact tracing.





- It is important to note that throughout this process the privacy of the individual affected is of utmost importance. The identity, health status, and other personal information of the individual affected is only shared as necessary with health care providers. ISC does NOT share personal information about any individuals with the Chief, community leaders, or others.

### **What is contact tracing and how long does contact tracing take?**

- Contact tracing is a process to identify individuals who may have come into close contact with someone who is infected by COVID-19, and therefore is at greater risk of getting infected – or spreading the virus – themselves.
- Contact tracing is usually conducted by the public health authority and/or ISC public health professionals, following established public health practices. Anyone identified through the contact tracing process will be informed of the appropriate steps to take (e.g. self-isolation at home).
- Contact tracing is a multi-faceted process. How long it takes depends on the specific situation. If the affected person has travelled recently, attended large gatherings, or been in close contact with large number of other people, the contact tracing process will take longer than for someone who has already been isolating at home for a period of time.

### **I know of/have heard of a case of COVID-19 in my community. Why is contact tracing taking so long?**

- Due to the nature of the virus, contact tracing is very important for confirmed cases of COVID-19. Contact tracing is also, however, time consuming, and labour intensive. ISC is working with Provincial/Territorial health partners to increase the capacity of public health teams to do more contact tracing, more quickly.

### **Why will ISC not release the names of people infected with COVID-19?**

- Even during health emergencies, we must respect the privacy and dignity of individuals; federal privacy rules still apply. The identity, health status, and other personal information of the individual affected is only shared as necessary with health care providers. ISC does NOT share personal information about any individuals with the Chief, community leaders, or others.
- ISC has been working diligently with provincial/territorial partners and First Nations leadership across the country to support First Nations communities in their preparations and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chiefs/and or other community leaders are informed of confirmed cases in their community so that they can take action as required according to their own protocols or emergency pandemic plan.



- In addition, many Indigenous and other remote communities are very small. Sharing or circulating unconfirmed information or rumours can be harmful to individuals and can put entire communities at risk by making it more difficult for health professionals to provide appropriate care.
- We ask for everyone in affected communities to respect the privacy of their friends, family and neighbours, as we all work through this difficult time.