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Coronavirus Information Backgrounder

The novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus from the same coronavirus pathogen family as the common cold virus, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). COVID-19 symptoms include fever, dry cough, possible sneezing, possible muscle pain and shortness of breath leading to the more serious complication of extreme difficulty in breathing and pneumonia.

All coronaviruses are zoonotic (transmitted between animals and humans) with SARS being transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS being transmitted from dromedary camels to humans. It is believed that COVID-19 transmission may be between bats to humans (with a possible other animal intermediary); however, additional research is required to fully understand the original transmission vector.

It is also believed that this virus originated in the Wuhan province of China. Unfortunately, the quarantine of Wuhan and its surrounding area did not prevent the spread of the virus throughout the rest of the world. As of November 29, 2020, the virus has spread to 218 countries; and the number of cases and deaths are increasing each day. For the latest world-wide number of cases and deaths, visit the [WHO](#) website.

This virus is mainly spread via airborne transmission vectors; however, it has been detected in respiratory secretions/droplets, tear fluid, feces, and blood. The incubation period is up to 14 days so patients may be contagious before any symptom exhibits itself in an individual.

The [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\)](#) website has detailed information on appropriate infection prevention and control protocols, ways to reduce or eliminate community spread and resources available during this pandemic crisis.

All Albertans who experience any symptoms must self-isolate and monitor themselves as per AHS protocols.

We now know that vaccines will become available in early 2021. As such, the best precaution against community spread is to stay home as much as possible, wear a face mask, wash your hands on a regular basis, use disposable disinfectant wipes on all surfaces you come into contact with; and, limit contact with other individuals by practicing appropriate social distancing (at least 6 feet apart) when out in public.