

## FAQ

### Ending the declared state of public health emergency under the *Public Health Act*

**1. When will the declared state of public health emergency end?**

The state of public health emergency announced on March 17, 2020 under the *Public Health Act* ended on June 15, 2020.

**2. Why end the declared state of public health emergency?**

Alberta's COVID-19 statistics demonstrate the diligence and hard work of Albertans in battling COVID-19 and flattening the curve. With the lower rate of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and ICU bed occupancy, the additional powers granted to the government during a public health emergency are no longer required, generally speaking, after the powers lapse on August 14, 2020. The public health orders made by the Chief Medical Officer (CMOH) will continue until rescinded by the CMOH. Public health officials will closely monitor the number of active cases, hospitalizations and ICU bed occupancy as the province transitions through relaunch.

**3. Does this mean the pandemic is over?**

No. While Albertans have done a commendable job in reducing the impact of COVID-19 and flattening the curve, the virus has not gone away and will continue to pose a risk to Albertans. This is particularly true for those who are vulnerable to serious health impacts from COVID-19, such as older Albertans, and those with certain underlying health conditions (obesity, high blood pressure, diabetes, immunocompromised individuals, etc.). That is why it is important to continue to be diligent in using all measures we have to reduce and prevent transmission, such as frequent hand washing, limiting social contacts, physical distancing, and wearing a mask when distancing is not possible. [Learn more about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19.](#)

**4. What happens when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

When the declared state of public health emergency ends, the additional powers granted to various Ministers, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Regional Health Authority under the State of Public Health Emergency provisions in the *Public Health Act* will, generally speaking, end 60 days after June 15, 2020 (i.e. on August 14, 2020). These powers include:

- acquiring or using any real or personal property;
- authorizing or requiring any qualified person to render aid authorizing the conscription of persons needed to meet an emergency;
- authorizing the entry into any building or on any land
- providing for the distribution of essential health and medical supplies and co-ordinating the delivery of health services.
- authorizing, by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the absence of any ill employees, or those who are caring for a family member ill with COVID-19.
- protecting employees from termination, restriction and discrimination if they miss work due to certain issues related to COVID-19
- enabling compensation for anyone whose real or personal property is acquired or used and where the property becomes damaged or destroyed due to the acquisition or use.

The government will return to its normal processes for the creation and amendment of legislation, regulation and policy.

**5. What happens to public health orders made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

The creation and enforcement of public health orders made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health are not tied to the declared state of public health emergency and will continue until they are rescinded. [Learn more about public health orders here.](#)

Under the *Public Health Act*, medical officers of health have broad powers to address communicable diseases, including COVID-19. The CMOH may take whatever steps she considers necessary to suppress the disease in those already infected, protect those who have not been exposed, break the chain of transmission, prevent spread and remove the source of infection.

**6. When the declared state of public health emergency ends, do the requirements for isolation and quarantine change?**

No. The requirement for isolation or quarantine of individuals with COVID-19, individuals with symptoms, international travellers and close contacts of confirmed cases was made by Chief Medical Officer of Health in a public health order, and that order remains in effect until rescinded. Albertans are [legally required to isolate](#) or quarantine for:

- 14 days if they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19 or returned from international travel; or
- 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer, for confirmed cases of COVID-19 or if Albertans have any symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition: cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat.

[Learn more about isolation requirements here.](#)

**7. Can I visit with family and have gatherings when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

Guidance on gathering limits and cohort families and groups still apply now that the declared state of public health emergency is over. [Learn more about gatherings and cohort families and groups here.](#)

**8. Can individuals and businesses still be fined for not complying with public health orders made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health during the declared state of public health emergency?**

Yes, individuals and businesses that are not complying with public health orders made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health may still be fined for violation, as the public health orders remain in effect until rescinded. [Learn more about public health orders here.](#)

[Guidance documents are available at Alberta BizConnect](#) to help businesses and other entities relaunch and operate safely, including after the expiry of the declared state of public health emergency on June 15.

**9. Can complaints still be submitted for potential violations of public health orders when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

Yes. If Albertans are concerned that individuals or businesses are not following public health orders, they can:

- [submit a complaint online to AHS](#)

- Call AHS at [1-833-415-9179](tel:1-833-415-9179) to submit a complaint by leaving a message when prompted

**10. Have the rules regarding visits to nursing homes, seniors lodges, long term care facilities, and supportive living facilities changed now that the declared state of public health emergency has ended?**

The rules for visiting auxiliary hospitals, nursing homes, designated supportive living and long-term care facilities, seniors lodges and any facility in which residential addiction treatment services are provided in public health orders made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health (orders 13-2020 and 23-2020) and will continue for the foreseeable future. [Please visit the AHS Information for Visiting Residents and Patients site](#) for the most up-to-date information on visiting.

**11. What happens to the relaunch guidance, available on <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx> from Alberta Health when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

Alberta Health will continue to provide public health guidance to support relaunch. Guidance is available to support a healthy relaunch to keep Albertans safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**12. What does it mean if my municipality still has a local state of emergency in place?**

Municipalities may declare a local state of emergency under the *Emergency Management Act*. For more information on what a continued local state of emergency means in your municipality, please visit or contact your local municipal government.

**13. When the declared state of public health emergency ends, does that mean the relaunch strategy is complete?**

No. Alberta is continuing to transition through the stages of the relaunch strategy. Stage 2 of the strategy began on June 12, 2020 as Alberta has seen low infection rates of COVID-19, along with low rates of hospitalization and ICU bed occupancy. Stage 3 timing will be determined based on health indicators. More information about the relaunch strategy is available [online](#).

**14. If Alberta's number of COVID-19 cases increases, can another public health emergency be declared?**

If it is needed in the future, Alberta would be able to declare another state of public health emergency relating to all or any part of Alberta.

**15. Would a second declared state of public health emergency function the same as the first declared state of public health emergency?**

Alberta is closely monitoring COVID-19 indicators to keep Albertans healthy. If a second declared state of public health emergency is needed, any restrictions put in place would be informed by public health experts and the latest information about COVID-19 in Alberta.

**16. Do any of the financial supports available end when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

The financial supports will have variable end dates specific to each particular support.

For example, the utility payment deferral program ends on June 18, 2020. Please check the [alberta.ca/COVID19](https://alberta.ca/COVID19) website to determine the end date for the specific financial support provided by the Government of Alberta.

**17. Will international travel restrictions be lifted when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

Restrictions placed on international travel remain in place and are determined by the Government of Canada, and are not associated with Alberta's declared state of public health emergency. For information regarding international travel, visit the Government of Canada [website](#). Travel outside Alberta is still not recommended at this time.

**18. Can I travel outside of Alberta when the declared state of public health emergency ends?**

Travel outside Alberta is still not recommended at this time. This recommendation will not be lifted until Stage 3 of [Alberta's relaunch strategy](#). Responsible travel within Alberta is permitted, including to second homes, vacation homes, cabins, cottages, hotel/commercial accommodations, campgrounds and national and provincial parks. Physical distancing and gathering restrictions still apply.

**19. Will Alberta's approach to COVID-19 testing change now that the declared state of public health emergency has ended?**

At this time, Alberta will continue its current approach to testing. Any Albertan who wants to be tested can now be tested, even if they don't have symptoms.

The following groups will continue to receive priority for testing:

- any person exhibiting any [symptom of COVID-19](#)
- all close contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases
- all workers and/or residents at specific outbreak sites
- all workers and residents at long-term care and supportive living facilities
- all patients admitted to continuing care or transferred between continuing care and hospital settings

Book a testing appointment [online](#) with the AHS assessment tool, or call Health Link 811 for assistance.