

## **SENIORS AND HOUSING**

### ***Protection from COVID-19***

#### How do you protect yourself and others from COVID-19?

- Practice social distancing.
- Stay home and away from others if sick or in isolation.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Avoid travel outside Canada.
- Self-isolate for 14 days if you:
  - recently returned from travel outside of Canada
  - have a cough, fever, fatigue and/or difficulty breathing
  - are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19
  - have been asked by a health care professional for another reason

### ***Practice social distancing***

#### What is social distancing?

- Social distancing involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with. It can help you reduce the risk of getting sick.
- This is not the same as self-isolation. You do not need to remain indoors, but you do need to avoid being in close contact with people.
- We are asking all Albertans to practice social distancing to help protect themselves and limit the spread of COVID-19.

#### How do you practice social distancing?

- Keep at least six feet (the length of a bicycle) from others when going out for groceries, medical trips and other essential needs.
- Limit the number of times you leave your home for errands.
- Try to shop at less busy times.
- Order online to have groceries or other items delivered if possible.
- Go for a walk in your neighbourhood or park while maintaining distance from others.
- Avoid overcrowding in elevators or other enclosed spaces.
- Wash or sanitize your hands after touching communal surfaces

## **Self-isolation**

### Why should an individual self-isolate?

- Self-isolation means avoiding situations where you could infect other people. It is a good way to help prevent the spread of infections like COVID-19.
- When you are exposed to an illness, there is a time between the exposure and when you start to feel sick. This incubation period is usually two to 10 days for COVID-19, but can be up to 14 days. Not everyone who is exposed will get sick, but it is necessary to wait the full two weeks to be sure you are not infected.
- There is a very small chance you can spread the germs before you feel sick, as many people have very mild symptoms at the start of their sickness. Staying home means that if you do start to feel sick, it lowers the chance the virus could spread to others.

### Who should self-isolate?

- You must self-isolate for 14 days if you:
- Recently returned from travel outside of Canada, even if feeling well
  - this means staying separated from anyone who did not travel with you, including household members
- Are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- Have been asked by a health care professional for another reason.
- If you become sick, you must self-isolate from all other members of your household for 10 days from the beginning of symptoms or until you are feeling well, whichever takes longer.

### How do you self-isolate?

- Stay home – do not attend work, school, social events or any other public gatherings.
- Avoid close contact with other people – especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems.
- Don't take public transportation like buses, taxis or ride sharing, where possible.
- Watch for symptoms in yourself or a family member.

## **Seniors social isolation**

### What can Albertans do to help seniors who may be struggling with social isolation or feelings of loneliness?

- One of the most meaningful actions Albertans can take is simply picking up the phone.
- Even spending just a few minutes on the phone, or other technology, with a senior is a small action that can have a big impact.
- It can go a long way toward reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- This is especially important for seniors who are living alone.
- Regular phone calls with our elder loved ones can become part of our “new normal”.

## What can seniors do to protect their personal health and wellbeing?

- During this difficult time, seniors can protect their mental health and feel more connected by taking the following steps:
  - Call a friend or family member
  - Exercise in their home
  - Go for a walk, while remembering to practice social distancing
  - Get fresh air by opening a window or going outside for a few minutes each day

## Where can seniors find support in the community?

- If you need to find support in your community, reach out to 211 or Alberta Supports.
- 211 is a comprehensive informational referral system accessible for all Albertans. Call or text 2-1-1 or visit [ab.211.ca](http://ab.211.ca).
- Alberta Supports can help you access more than 30 programs and 120 services available through the Government of Alberta. Call 1-877-644-9992 toll-free provincewide.

## What if you do not have COVID-19 symptoms and you need medical assistance for another reason, but cannot get treatment (medicentres are closed/doctors are turning patients away/I can't get through to Health Link). What should you do?

- We understand the strain that COVID-19 is causing on many Albertans. If your family physician or other health-care provider is unable or unwilling to receive you, we recommend you contact another health-care provider.
- To find a family doctor near you who is accepting new patients, Primary Care Networks and the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta offer online tools. Visit <https://albertafindadoctor.ca/> and <https://search.cpsa.ca/physiciansearch>
- We recommend the postponement of any non-essential visits at this time.
- You may also download the Babylon by Telus Health App to meet with Alberta-licensed physicians through your smartphone.

## ***Prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, among seniors and vulnerable groups***

### Is it OK to visit a family member in continuing care, long-term care and seniors lodges?

- Visitors to any continuing care, long-term care and seniors lodges in Alberta are limited to a single individual designated by the resident or guardian.
- Each essential visitor must be verified and undergo a health screening prior to entering the facility. This may include a temperature check or a questionnaire.
- Facilities must have security staff or a greeter to conduct this screening and verify the visitor is designated.
- Exceptions to these essential visitor rules will be made for family members to visit a person who is dying, so long as only one visitor enters the facility at a time.

## **Seniors and fraud**

### What can be done to protect seniors from scam artists trying to take advantage of the pandemic?

- In emergencies like this, vulnerable individuals, especially seniors, are often targeted by unscrupulous con artists trying taking advantage of people's fear and uncertainty.
- They can pose as door-to-door salespeople, telemarketers, collection agents and sometimes even distant relatives asking for help.
- If you have a parent, grandparent, vulnerable family friend or neighbour, you are encouraged to watch out for them. Offer to be their buddy, someone they can check in with before responding to matters involving money.
- Be that calm, informed person who can advise them about when a caller or salesperson is legitimate or a scammer.
- Albertans are urged to practice social distancing, and continue to look out for one another.

## **Temporary closure of seniors information services office**

### What is happening to the Seniors Information Services Office?

- The Seniors Information Services Office, located on Jasper Avenue in Edmonton, is closed temporarily.

### What is the Seniors Information Services Office?

- The Edmonton Seniors Information Services Office provides in-person service to clients in need of information and support to access provincial seniors financial assistance programs.
- This storefront setup is unique to Edmonton. Seniors in all other areas of the province access information in-person through the Alberta Supports Contact Centres or via the Alberta Supports phone line.

### Where should seniors go for information and supports now that the office is closed?

- Seniors can contact Alberta Supports at 1-877-644-9992.

### When will the office reopen?

- Seniors Information Services Office is closed until further notice.

## **Other reliable sources of information**

### Where can seniors go for trustworthy information about COVID-19?

- [alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans](https://alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans)
- [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\) COVID-19 updates](#)

- [Government of Canada COVID-19 updates](#)
- [World Health Organization COVID-19 updates](#)
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