

What is coronavirus or COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They can cause illness ranging from mild symptoms, like the common cold, to more severe illness such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV). You may have previously heard of these illnesses- they are all coronaviruses. COVID-19 is a new disease caused by a strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.

How many cases of coronavirus are there in New Brunswick?

As of March 23, 2020, there were 17 positive cases of COVID-19 in New Brunswick. Of these 17, 9 are confirmed cases and 8 are presumptive cases.

What is the difference between ‘confirmed cases’ and ‘presumptive cases’?

‘confirmed cases’ are cases that have been verified by the National Microbiology Lab in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

‘presumptive cases’ are cases that have been screened at the Georges Dumont Hospital in Moncton and have returned a positive result. All presumptive cases are sent to the Microbiology Lab for final confirmation.

How is coronavirus spread?

Coronaviruses are spread from an infected person to another through close physical contact, such as shaking hands. Coronavirus can also be spread through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Coronavirus can also be contracted by touching something, such as a computer keyboard or other surface that has the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

What are the symptoms of this coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Symptoms to COVID-19 are similar to those of a cold or the flu. They include fever, difficulty breathing, coughing, and pneumonia.

What should I do if I have these symptoms?

Do not go to the emergency department at the hospital! Before doing anything, if you have a computer you can conduct a self-assessment by using a ‘self-assessment tool’ that can be accessed at the following web link:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus/assessment.html#/app/symptom-checker/guides/399/what-to-do

You may also dial **811** on your telephone, which is the provincial tele-care number. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you believe you have COVID-19 symptoms, call this number and further directions will be given to you.

I have heard a lot about ‘self-isolating’ and ‘social distancing’. What do these mean?

Because the COVID-19 is so easily transmitted from person to person, experts in the medical and public health fields, including our own Chief Medical Officer of Health, have strongly recommended that the general public practise self-isolation. This means that each of us, regardless of our age, should stay at home and avoid contact with other people. This will help to prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community. If you must go out, it has been strongly recommended that you practise social distancing. This means that you take steps to ensure there is at least 6 feet (2 metres) kept between yourself and those around you.

What can I do to help limit the spread of COVID-19?

You can help limit the spread of this illness by following the recommendations of medical and public health officials by self-isolating; do not meet or gather with other people unless absolutely necessary. You can also help limit the spread of the illness by practising good hygiene- frequent hand-washing with warm soapy water, keeping all surfaces clean and sterile, coughing/sneezing into your arm/elbow, disposing of tissues properly, and if you do happen to be around others, keep a distance of at least 6 feet.

The Government of New Brunswick has declared a state of emergency; what does this mean?

A state of emergency has been declared due to the increased presence of COVID-19 in New Brunswick and its risk to the health and safety of all New Brunswickers. This declaration has the full support of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and reflects the seriousness of this situation. The state of emergency declaration will help ensure that people practise self isolation and social distancing. As a result of the declaration, many retail stores and restaurants are now closed to the public (you may still order online products, order food by way of take-out or delivery). Entertainment venues (i.e. movie theatres, bowling alleys, casinos, etc.) are closed, and many social activities are now prohibited. In short, it is best for you to remain at home, unless you absolutely must go out or are required to for work purposes.

What do I do if I need groceries or medications?

There is no food shortage, and grocery shelves will not go bare. The state of emergency declaration has not closed grocery stores and pharmacies. Grocery stores remain open and should you need groceries, you may go to the grocery store to get them. Similarly, pharmacies are open and available should you need to get any medications. Some grocery stores and pharmacies have offered special hours to seniors (aged 65 and over) to make things easier for them. Others have begun to offer delivery services so that you will not have to leave your home. It is recommended that you check with your local grocery store and/or pharmacy to confirm their hours of operation and also whether they offer delivery services.

Where can I find up-to-date information about COVID-19?

In New Brunswick, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Premier are providing daily updates at 2:30pm each day. You can watch these updates on your television or your computer. You can also get information from the following websites:

https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html (Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health – New Brunswick)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html> (Public Health Agency of Canada)