COVID-19

The situation around COVID-19 is evolving; however, WCB continues to provide coverage for work-related instances of COVID infection.

In doing so, the following applies:

- WCB is committed to ensuring workers who contract illness in the workplace, as a result of their regular duties, get the coverage and support they need.
- We will work to ensure there are alternative ways to confirm COVID-19 cases in the workplace if testing is unavailable to you.
- There are circumstances where WCB may not require a test to adjudicate a claim, as in the case of a workplace outbreak – healthcare settings.

Most instances of COVID-19 are not work-related and do not need to be reported to WCB-Alberta. However, there are a few exceptions.

When COVID-19 may be work-related

When a worker contracts COVID-19 as a direct result of the duties of their employment, they are entitled to compensation if the following conditions are met:

- The nature of employment involves sufficient exposure to the source of infection,
- The nature of employment is shown to be the cause of the condition,
- The nature of employment creates a greater risk of exposure for the worker.

**Reference:** Policy 03-01: Part II - Occupational Disease

In every case, WCB-Alberta adjudicates work-relatedness and benefit entitlement based on the specific and unique circumstances of each case.

Some occupations are known to create greater risk of exposure to COVID-19. For example, those workers who provide direct care to patients with the condition. Examples may include but are not limited to:

- Nurses
- EMT/Paramedics
- Hospital cleaning staff
- Nursing home staff
- Homecare aids
- Prison infirmary staff

In addition, workers whose employment requires them to provide direct service to the general public are at an increased risk of exposure. Examples of these types of occupations may include, but are not limited to:

- First responders
- Correctional officers
- Grocery workers who interact directly with the general public
- Other retail workers who serve the general public
- Bus drivers
- School janitors
- Restaurant staff such as waiters, table clearers, hostesses, etc.
- Hotel staff who provide direct client service and/or clean rooms where an infected person has stayed
- Other occupations which require direct extended contact with the general public.

A worker will also likely be covered in the event of a widespread outbreak at their place of work.

**Acute care and continuing care facilities**

Locations of outbreaks in acute care and continuing care facilities are reported publicly when there are two or more cases, indicating that transmission within the facility has occurred.

**All other workplaces and facilities**

Outbreaks at daycares and schools will be reported publicly when there are five or more cases.

In the case of workplaces outside of the above, outbreaks may not be reported by Alberta Public Health. However, a cluster of COVID-19 cases within a workplace may still be considered an increased risk of exposure.
When do I report a case of COVID-19 to WCB-Alberta?

Report it if it meets the specific criteria for exposure, cause and risk outlined in this document and in Policy 03-01, Part II – Occupational Disease, Q4.

Do not report if:

1. You were on vacation or away from work at the time of infection.
2. You are not ill but must quarantine due to a suspected or confirmed exposure.
3. You tested negative.

WCB will investigate all cases reported to determine coverage.

A co-worker sneezed or coughed on me. If I catch COVID-19 am I covered, or do I report it?

No. COVID-19 can be caught through many different contacts in the community, home or work. This case of single-person transmission is not considered work-related.

If I’m sent home to avoid getting sick, do I need to report it to WCB-Alberta?

No, if there is no illness, there is no claim. There’s no need to report this to WCB-Alberta.

Will WCB accept COVID-19 claims where there are symptoms present but no medical reporting that confirms a diagnosis of COVID-19?

We do not require medical reporting that confirms a diagnosis but do require that you have tested positive.

For an infectious disease to be compensable, the worker must have contracted it (i.e., not just exposed to it). It is expected that a worker who wishes to make a claim for contracting COVID-19 at work undergo a test and the test result is positive. If testing is not available, then confirmation from a healthcare provider that you are believed to have COVID-19 will be required.

If you think you have COVID-19, please call Health Link at 811 and follow their advice. If you are not severely ill, they may instruct you to remain at home (in self isolation), until your symptoms fully resolve. If your symptoms persist or worsen beyond the self-isolation period, you should seek medical treatment and ask to have that reporting forwarded to WCB-Alberta.

What happens when I submit a COVID-19 claim?

Like any other claim, WCB-Alberta must determine whether your exposure to the disease arose out of the course of your employment and was caused by an employment hazard (in this case, workplace exposure to the virus).

We have a team of people who specialize in the adjudication of infectious disease claims and can appropriately apply policy and legislation. If your illness meets the conditions for coverage, WCB-Alberta will cover medical aid costs and any time lost due to the condition.