

COVID-19 Outbreak Info – Cargill Meats

Q & A for Plant Workers

April 30, 2020

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About the Illness:

- **How long are you contagious, once you get COVID?**
 - We believe you are infectious for 10 days from when you first have symptoms or until your symptoms end, whichever is longer
 - This is why we tell people to not come in contact with other people for 10 days, to protect those around you from getting sick.
 - This is called self-isolation.
 - And, even if that 10 days has passed, but you are still sick: we ask that you continue to self-isolate to prevent spreading infection to others.
- **Are there any cases of people becoming re-infected (infected for a second time) after having confirmed COVID-19?**
 - In general we do not think people get re-infected with COVID.
- **Should we be worried about another wave of COVID?**
 - Even though we seem to have had a large number of cases in the Calgary-area, it's really a very small percentage of the total population.
 - That means there are many of us who have not been exposed to the virus
 - The concern is that if the virus comes back and we are not taking all of the precautions that we recommend, we could see a large number of cases develop and spread.
 - We have seen this in workplace and family gatherings, where many participants became ill and then passed the virus to their own family members.
 - To see all of the precautions being recommended at this time, visit www.alberta.ca/covid19.
- **If I have taken the TB vaccination or have TB latent immunity, do I have partial immunity against COVID?**
 - No.
 - We are not aware of any research that suggests that the TB vaccine has an impact on COVID-19.
 - There is currently no vaccine that prevents COVID-19 infection.

Testing:

- **What does “tested and confirmed positive”, versus “infected not tested” mean?**
 - Occasionally, we learn that someone had been ill, but their test came back as negative. It is very likely that these people had COVID-19 but it was not possible to confirm with a lab test due to the time that had passed since their symptoms started. These cases, if they had a COVID exposure history, are referred to as ‘infected not tested’.
 - Anyone that has a positive test for COVID is considered ‘tested and confirmed positive’.
 - It is important to note that anyone with signs of illness must stay home from work.

- Any person in Alberta who has symptoms of COVID-19 is also eligible for testing. They can go to www.ahs.ca/covid and complete an online assessment to be referred for testing, free of charge.
- **I have heard from different Cargill workers who get tested and are positive. Most of them said they don't have any symptoms. I am so confused. What's the reason?**
 - There are some people who test positive but do not show symptoms. This could be because we're testing them before they are showing symptoms. A small percentage of people never show symptoms – we think they are less infectious, but these people are still required to stay home (see point below)
 - Even if you are not showing symptoms now – if you have a positive test, you either have to:
 - If symptoms never develop, stay home for 10 days from when the test was taken
 - If symptoms develop, stay home for 10 days from when symptoms start or until symptoms end, whichever is longer
- **People who don't show symptoms can also spread the virus. How do we know if people who are working in Cargill or other places in High River are spreading the virus? Why not test everyone?**
 - We are offering testing to people working in Cargill and other meat plants, even if they don't have symptoms.
 - It is not a requirement to be tested if you don't have symptoms, but sometimes we do it to understand how the infection is spreading.
 - Similarly in Continuing Care Homes, we are testing staff and residents, even if they don't have symptoms.
 - For the general Alberta population, it is most important to test those who have symptoms, as they are most infectious and likely to spread the infection.
 - Anyone with symptoms in Alberta is also eligible for testing.
 - We must ensure we balance the testing capacity we have with our testing strategy.
 - All testing is free of charge and not mandatory
- **Why we are not having a second test after the first positive result? They are just relying on our symptoms, why not make it mandatory to do a test after the 14 days quarantine, because there are cases that they are still having positive result despite not having symptoms.**
 - We believe at this time that it is not necessary to wait until someone has a negative test.
 - The test that we do detects the virus but it cannot tell whether the virus is alive or dead.
 - Studies have found while the test for the virus can be positive after 10 days that it is because of the presence of dead virus that cannot infect someone.
 - Please NOTE: the Cargill Plant is recommending that all staff be tested prior to returning to work. AHS has agreed to that program with the understanding that it is not mandatory – all employees are welcome to seek testing, but should not be required to be tested or to be re-tested prior to returning to work.
- **How do we accommodate for (control community spread) people who are asymptomatic carriers, if we are not testing everyone?**
 - Looking at Cargill and other employment situations where we see clusters of infections we found it was very important to test everyone to track the spread and ensure we limit the spread.
 - With regards to the general population, we are focusing our testing on those people who are most likely to infect others, and those people are the ones with symptoms.
 - Anyone in Alberta with symptoms is eligible for testing.
 - Once an individual is tested, we use “contact tracers” to follow-up with the close contacts of those symptomatic people to arrange for testing of the “close contacts”. This allows us to identify where they might have picked up the infection, and to notify and work with those who may have been exposed. Our goal is to limit the spread.

- **Case numbers continue to go up at Cargill. Is this concerning?**
 - COVID-19 in an ongoing pandemic, worldwide.
 - The more we test in the Alberta population, the more cases of this illness we will identify, as we know that this virus is circulating in our communities.
 - By isolating ill individuals, and not allowing their return to work until they are symptom free, the workplace remains safe.
- **How can we help Cargill workers to get tested for COVID-19?**
 - The online self-assessment is a quick way to ensure you get the testing you may need. You can access it by visiting the AHS webpage at ahs.ca/covid.
 - If you feel you need an assessment, please follow self-isolation procedures, take the online assessment OR call 811 to speak with a Health Link nurse. Our Health Link 811 nurses have been specially trained to respond to concerns about potential COVID-19 exposure.
- **I tried to do the online assessment, but I don't understand the questions. What other options does AHS have?**
 - People can call HealthLink 811 to speak directly with a Registered Nurse who has been specially trained to respond to concerns about potential COVID-19 exposure.
 - Health link offers interpretation services, in more than 300 languages, 24/7. If you need language support, please call 811 to help.

Self-Isolation and Protection

- **If there is a confirmed case in the household, what should the other people in that household do?**
 - If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the household, all other members of the household should self-isolate for 14 days from the first date that the case's symptoms showed and the case took precautions to self-isolate from other household members.
 - This will help prevent the spread of the infection.
 - If another member of the household tests positive, the 14 days starts again for the whole household if there is ongoing interaction with the positive case
 - If people are having difficulty self-isolating because of a large household there is support available to help people self-isolate. To access these services, you can contact your family physician or 811
- **Is it okay to be walking around in the community?**
 - Individuals who are confirmed cases of COVID-19, or who are required to be on self-isolation, are not allowed to leave their own property.
 - If you do not have COVID-19 positive and are not required to be in self-isolation, you can walk around in the community.
 - Please be sure to still keep six feet social distance from anyone. This is something we are asking all Albertans to do.
- **Why is it that some people in my household have gotten COVID-19 and other people in my same household haven't?**
 - In many households in China, only 15% of family members got infected. How many people get infected depends on how good the sick person is at isolating from the family members who are well
 - It may be that the normal measures you and your family do - such as hand washing and regular household cleaning - were able to stop the infection being spread between your family members.
- **If one person is diagnosed with COVID-19, is it possible to diagnose the entire household with COVID without further testing as the chances of them being positive is very high?**

- When we have a household where there is a confirmed case, all the people in that household are considered “close contacts”, in that they would have been exposed to the COVID positive person.
- When you are considered exposed to COVID, you should be self-isolating for the 14 days. In one household, this would mean that all family members of a confirmed case of COVID in the same house would be required to self-isolate for 14 days, and monitor to see if they develop symptoms.
- Practicing the disinfecting and isolation recommendations within the household is still important to reduce the chance of the infection spreading between family members in the house.

Transportation

- **For people under quarantine, how can they overcome the challenge of getting transportation to go to the clinics or hospital? Taxi companies are not cooperating in giving rides to people with COVID-19. What means of transportation can AHS provide? How do people who don't have transportation go to the testing site if they don't have friends or family who can take them?**
 - For those who are not able to attend designated swabbing sites, other arrangements for swabbing can be made based on the online and 811 assessments for individuals. This could be through community public health nurses, community paramedics, or primary care networks.
 - For those who do not drive, they can use public transit, ride with a friend/neighbor or take a cab, provided they engage in distancing where possible and also wear a mask that covers the mouth and nose. They also cannot make any stops in between wherever they're isolating and the testing site.
 - For more information, see the Alberta government's exemption for quarantined/isolated individuals who require COVID-19 testing. <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/exemption-isolated-persons-who-require-covid-19-testing-critical-care-emergency-care>

Supports Available

- **Which assistance is available to help support self-isolation?**
 - The community agencies listed can help individuals with the resources they need to be able to safely self-isolate in their home. They can also help identify other options if individuals/families are encountering difficulties self-isolating.
- **Some workers were disappointed because they couldn't get help to get Tylenol. Do you provide medication to workers and families isolating at home? How does that work?**
 - No, AHS does not supply medication.
 - The community agencies may be able to help you with options to get the medications that you need.
 - If you feel you need any medications, please call your local pharmacist or family physician. You can also call 811, who can refer you to a family physician)

See the following list of additional resources:

Calgary Catholic Immigration Society

403-262-2006

UFCW Local 401

403-291-1047

Report illness to Cargill

403-652-4688

More information (variety of languages)

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>

Questions

Community.Engagement@ahs.ca