



ABORIGINAL HEALTH

FACT SHEET

The federal government provides health promotion programs and public health services on First Nations reserves and in identified Inuit communities. In remote and isolated areas, where provincially or territorially insured services are not readily available, the Government of Canada provides on-reserve primary and emergency care services.

Non-Insured Health Benefits are also provided to approximately 749,000 eligible First Nations and Inuit people. Coverage includes a specified range of medical goods and services (such as prescription drugs, vision care, dental services, medical supplies and equipment, and medical transportation) when these benefits are not provided through private or provincial/territorial health insurance plans.

Provincial governments provide universal insured health services to all citizens, including all Aboriginal people. First Nations and Inuit access health services provided by the provincial or territorial government (notably physician or hospital care), like any other resident. The federal government contributes towards these expenditures through the Canada Health Transfer.

In the Territories, the federal government has mostly devolved health services to the territorial governments, with the exception of some health promotion and disease prevention programs among First Nations and Inuit.


The status of Aboriginal health in Canada

Health is linked to a number of factors such as education, income, sanitation, nutrition, housing, environmental quality and health care access. Aboriginal health status has been improving over the past 20 years in some areas, such as life expectancy and reduction of infant mortality. Although Aboriginal people are enjoying better health today, it is still not as good as that of non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Aboriginal people face:

Higher rates of chronic diseases, such as diabetes: Type 2 diabetes affects First Nations and Métis people three to five times more than the general Canadian population. Although, there is less type 2 diabetes among the Inuit, they are beginning to acquire the disease in greater numbers.

Higher rates of infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis: First Nations/Inuit tuberculosis rates are 10 times higher than for other Canadians.



A gap in life expectancy of Aboriginal men and women compared to the non-Aboriginal population: On average, First Nations men live seven years less than other Canadian men, and First Nations women, five years less than other Canadian women. Life expectancy for Inuit is also believed to be lower although statistics are not available for all northern regions.

Higher rates of suicide, especially among Aboriginal youth: The suicide rate of First Nations youth is five to six times higher than the national average and for Inuit youth 11 times higher. Suicide is the single greatest cause of injury-related deaths for Aboriginal people.

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