

CMO SMOH Weekly Notice for AHS Medical Staff

December 18, 2020

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COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

On Tuesday afternoon, Alberta's COVID-19 vaccine rollout started adding some positive news on the pandemic front. Additionally, for the first time in three months, the average number of new daily cases for the week has decreased. Between Dec. 10 and Dec. 16, there was an average of 1,588 new COVID-19 cases daily compared to 1,733 the previous week, an eight per cent decrease.

It should be noted that the last time Alberta reported a decrease it was late September, when the average number of daily cases was under 150.

It's good the average number of daily new cases went down this past week but, there's room for further improvement.

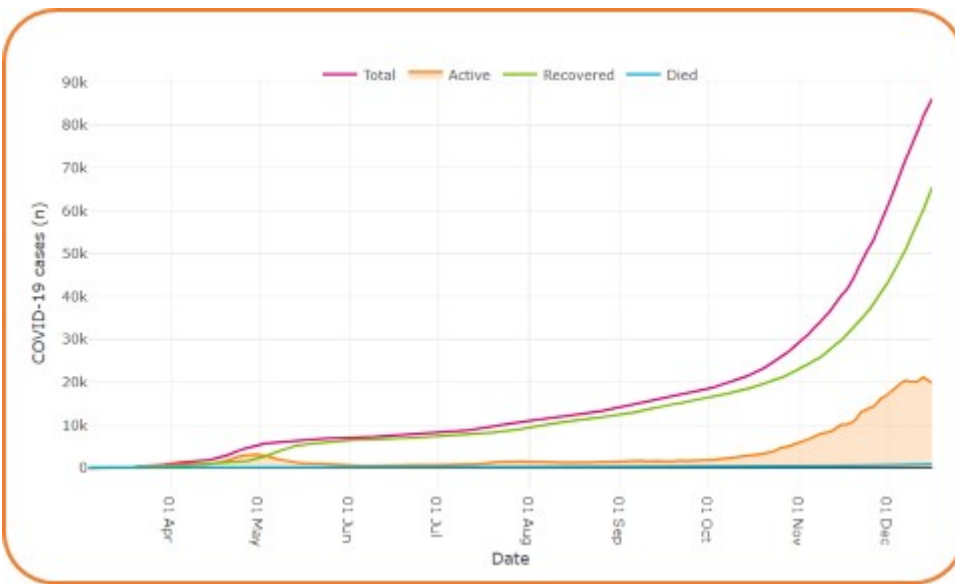


Image source: alberta.ca

Alberta reported 124 deaths this past week — which represents a staggering 15.7 per cent of all COVID-19-related deaths in the province. Our death count now stands at 790 individuals — and we extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.

There were more than 1,200 new cases reported every day this past week, and on Dec. 13, there were 1,867 new cases, just shy of the record of 1,884 set on Dec. 4. For the week ending Dec. 16, there were 5,846 cases among individuals ages 20 to 49 years; 2,030 new cases among school-aged children (five to 19 years); and 1,830 new cases among adults 60 years and older.

Alberta had a record number of active cases Dec. 13 with 21,123. On that same day, the Edmonton Zone passed 10,000 active cases, before falling back to 9,525.

The table below shows the number of active cases in each zone for the last two weeks.

	<i>Active Cases Week ending Dec. 16</i>	<i>Active Cases Week ending Dec. 9</i>	<i>Per cent change</i>
Edmonton	9,525	9,464	0.6%
Calgary	7,043	7,304	-3.6%
Central	1,462	1,480	-1.2%
North	1,214	1,247	-2.7%
South	541	601	-10%
Unknown	80	67	-19.4%

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

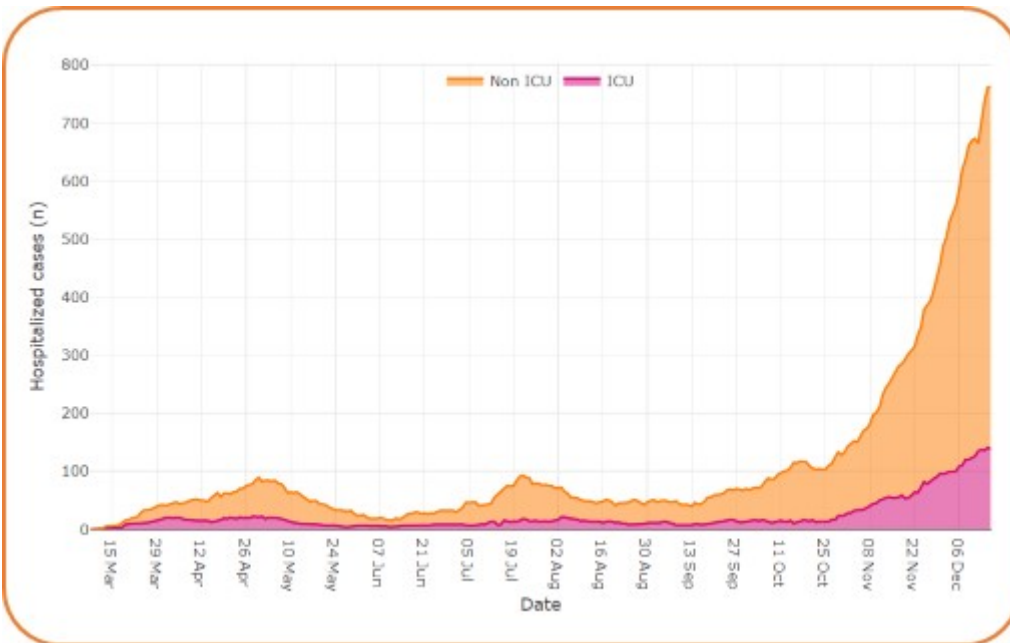


Image source: alberta.ca

As of Dec. 16, there are 682 individuals in Alberta hospitals (three fewer than the record number set on Dec. 15) with 124 in ICUs, another all-time high. These numbers represent a 34 per cent increase in total hospitalizations from the previous week. The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Dec. 16 is as follows:

	<i>Hospitalizations</i>	<i>ICU</i>
<i>Edmonton</i>	420	83
<i>Calgary</i>	229	40
<i>Central</i>	64	4
<i>North</i>	34	7
<i>South</i>	16	4

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- As of Dec. 16, a total of 86,168 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and a total of 2,935 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 3.4 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 65,513 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- In the past week, 137,272 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 19,610 per day. From Dec. 10 to Dec. 16, the daily positivity ranged from 7.34 per cent to 9.22 per cent. As of Dec. 16, a total of 2,582,185 tests have been conducted and 1,594,292 individuals have been tested.
- As of Dec. 17, AHS has confirmed 3,447 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. Currently, two of

every five schools (962 out of 2,415) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

Update: COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#). These statistics provide the total number of AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown of the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace.

As of December 16:

- 70,877 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 2,956 (or 4.17 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 986 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 304 (or 30.8 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 1,970 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,554 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 137 (or 3.01 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 45 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 7 (or 15.6 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 92 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

A [summary report](#) is now also available on the Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing data from May 15 - Aug. 31, 2020. AHS reviews the healthcare worker testing data on a quarterly basis to monitor any trends and ensure our COVID-19 guidance continues to reflect the current environment.

For more information, see the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing [infographic](#) and [dashboard](#).

First COVID-19 Vaccines Administered with Immunizations Beginning Next Week for Eligible Staff in all Zones; Vaccine Sequencing Information

This week, Alberta Health Services rolled out the first of 3,900 doses of COVID-19 vaccine to healthcare workers in Edmonton and Calgary.

Sahra Kaahiye, a Registered Respiratory Therapist in Edmonton was the first person in Alberta to receive a dose of COVID-19 vaccine, followed by Calgary ICU nurse Tanya Harvey.

As of 3 p.m. today, 1,306 doses have been delivered. We thank everyone involved in the vaccine rollout; the effort has been tremendous, and everyone involved has made extraordinary efforts.

Next week, we anticipate receiving an additional 25,350 doses for provincewide distribution.

Alberta Health is responsible for COVID-19 vaccine policy, including purchase and [allocation of vaccine](#). AH has updated its website today with some additional information on vaccine sequencing. With not enough vaccine available to offer immunizations to everyone at the same time, Alberta is undertaking a phased approach. To date, one product, Pfizer-BioNTech, has Health Canada approval.

AHS is responsible for administering COVID-19 vaccine as part of the provincial immunization program, and we are working within the immunization allocation parameters outlined by Alberta Health to provide immunization to groups as vaccine supply becomes available. Exact amounts and timelines are subject to change and the approach will be amended as needed depending on vaccine supply.

Alberta Health, with input from AHS, has identified the following staff to be included in the sequenced phased approach:

- **Early Phase 1: December**
Focus on acute care sites with the highest COVID-19 capacity concerns in Edmonton and Calgary:
 - Health-care workers in intensive care units
 - Respiratory therapists
 - Staff in long term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) facilities
- **Phase 1A: January (timeline subject to change depending on vaccine supply)**
 - Respiratory therapists
 - Health-care workers in intensive care units
 - Staff in long term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) facilities
 - Home care workers
 - Health-care workers in emergency departments
- **Phase 1B: February (timeline subject to change depending on vaccine supply)**
 - Health-care workers in medical, surgical and COVID-19 units and operating rooms.
- **Phase 2 (April to Sept 2021)**
Work to identify sequencing for Phase 2 groups is underway. Decisions will be made in 2021. While Alberta Health has not finalized details, frontline healthcare workers who have not been included in Early Phase or Phase 1 A and B, are expected to be included in Phase 2.
- **Phase 3 (Fall 2021)**
Anticipated start of roll-out to the general public

Health Care workers identified for immunization in Phase 1 were selected as the first to receive the vaccine as a way to support acute care capacity and to protect populations at highest risk of severe outcomes. This includes those who provide care to residents in long term care and designated supportive living, as well as home care staff, to help ensure their higher-risk clients can remain in their homes and prevent hospital admissions.

At this time the sequencing for Phase 2 is to be determined. Discussions are underway with Alberta Health. Additional information will be shared as timing and availability of vaccine is known.

Resources on COVID-19 vaccine have been developed and are available [here](#). A [website](#) for public has also been developed and will be updated as information becomes available.

Please remember to ensure your personal information is updated in the event we need to contact you to book your appointment.

If your contact information has changed since you last updated it through the January 2020 AIVA process, or if you haven't previously provided a direct phone number like a mobile phone to be able to be contacted for things like vaccination appointments, please send an email to the Medical Staff Office in your primary zone. Include your first and last name, CPSA registration number, what the new number you'd like us to contact you at and whether it is a home or business number as well as whether it is a landline or mobile.

Zone	Contact Email
South	medical.affairscrh@ahs.ca or medical.affairsmhrh@ahs.ca
Calgary	cal.medicalstaffoffice@ahs.ca
Central	cz.maprivileging@ahs.ca
Edmonton	edm.medicalaffairs@ahs.ca
North	nz.privileging@ahs.ca
Provincial Dept. of Public Health	jamie.rice@ahs.ca
Provincial Dept. of Lab Medicine	apl.medicalaffairs@albertaprecisionlabs.ca

Beginning in early 2021, an online scheduling application will be used to facilitate the booking process.

Please continue to check the [COVID-19 Vaccine webpage](#) for the latest information and the [FAQ](#), with specific information on vaccine rollout. These resources will be updated on an ongoing basis.

The administration of the first doses of COVID-19 vaccine, as well as the arrival of additional doses in our province truly is providing a light at the end of the tunnel.

With or without the vaccine, it is important that we all continue to follow [current restrictions](#) and health guidelines.

PPE Guidance Update: Eye Protection

As announced on December 2, AHS PPE Guidance now includes the use of eye protection.

Eye protection should now be worn by all healthcare workers involved in patient care, which includes all interactions within two metres of a patient. The enhanced eye protection will supplement our current PPE recommendation of continuous masking. Eye protection and a mask can be worn continuously for multiple patients, but should be changed as per [IPC protocols](#). Eye protection is to be changed or disinfected every time a mask is changed.

Face shields continue to be the preferred option for eye protection and are readily available province-wide. Other forms of eye protection will also be available including disposable face shields, mask/face shield combinations, reusable goggles, and safety glasses. Units, sites and clinics have adequate, safe PPE on hand for staff as well as others who may be on the unit such as physicians, specialists and lab services. Workers need to know the location of PPE in all areas they work in. Please work with your manager to find ways to make AHS supplied eye protection (non-prescription) work for you.

Bringing your own personal eye protection

Healthcare workers may bring their own prescription eye protection (e.g., safety glasses or goggles) for comfort reasons if the prescription eye protection serves the function of both prescription glasses and eye protection. Workers may also purchase their own non-prescription eye protection (e.g. safety glasses or goggles) for comfort reasons, if the eye protection meets the [requirements of protective eyewear to be worn in healthcare settings](#).

Standards for personal eye protection

Both personal prescription, and non-prescription eye protection must meet the following criteria:

- Eyewear must be equivalent to AHS supplied eye protection. Eyewear must be intended for use in a healthcare setting to protect the eyes from droplet exposure

(eyes are protected from small particles by fitting closely to face at top/brow area and both sides).

- Eyewear must meet CSA and/or ANSI 87.1 standards for personal protective equipment.

Workers who bring either prescription, or non-prescription eyewear must ensure this is only for their own personal use, and not shared or distributed to others in AHS.

Workers who choose to bring in their own prescription, or non-prescription eye protection are responsible for the cost, cleaning and disinfection of eye protection. This is in accordance with IPC routine practices or IPC PPE matrix for specific areas or roles. Follow [IPC COVID-19 PPE Recommendation for the Preservation and Reuse of Eye Protection](#) when using personal prescription eye protection.

Thank you for your continued diligence to help keep our patients, and each other, safe.

Verna's Weekly Video Message – Self-care Builds Resilience

We know these past nine months have been difficult. There have been many long days, and many long nights. In spite of that, you continue to do great work to protect the health of our patients, families, and each other.

These efforts are inspiring and we sincerely thank you. But we know that COVID-19 fatigue is real, and it's more important than ever to look after our mental wellness and continue to use self-care to help build our resilience.

Thankfully, self-care and resilience can be learned and developed, and I'd argue that no one is more resilient than our people.

With Verna to talk about resilience and mental wellness is Dr. Nick Mitchell, Provincial Medical Director, Addiction and Mental Health.

Watch the video [here](#).

PPE Question of the Week — How Does Workplace Health and Safety Assess COVID-19 Exposure?

In the latest instalment of PPE Question of the Week, Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos, Medical Director of Workplace Health and Safety (WHS), talks about the many factors that WHS considers when a healthcare worker has had a possible exposure to SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) and whether workplace exclusion, or quarantine, might be required.

These factors include the nature of the interaction between a healthcare worker and a COVID-19-positive individual, proximity to that individual, and duration of the exposure.

Watch the video [here](#).

Previous videos in PPE Question of the Week series are available on the PPE webpage as well at ahs.ca/covidppe.

Physician Diversity, Wellness and Leadership Development

Physician Wellness Zoom Room – New format: Group discussions will be included

Date: Tuesday, January 12, 5-6 p.m. MST

Topic: Hope

Co-Moderators: Dr. Debrah Wirtzfeld, Associate Chief Medical Officer, Physician Health, Wellness, AHS, and Diversity, Dr. Jennine Wismark, Associate Chief Medical Officer, Physician Wellness & Development, Covenant Health

Join: [Here](#).

Note: *Tuesday, December 30 Zoom Room is cancelled for the holidays.*

AHS resources on resilience, wellness and mental health

- [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#)
- [Self-care Tactics](#)
- [Going Home Checklist](#)
- [How do I support someone who may be struggling?](#)
- [Health and wellness resources for leaders](#)

Managing Seasonal Stress

As we prepare for a different holiday season, more than ever, it's important to continue to take care of ourselves and continue to be there for each other.

Please remember that there are many resources available to support your health and wellness during this time. Visit the [Physician and Family Support Program](#) (PFSP) through the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) or call at 1-877-SOS-4MDS available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Additional resources are below:

- www.ahs.ca/mdwellness
- [COVID-19 and Stigma](#)
- [Mental Wellness Moments](#)
- [Help in Tough Times](#)

Self-care is so important. To learn more, listen to [Our People Podcast – Holiday Reflections](#).

Doc of the Week – Dr. Judy MacDonald



Dr. Judy MacDonald, is a long time public health leader from the Calgary zone and an expert collaborator. Dr. MacDonald is one of seven physicians who have generously come out of retirement, and more who have volunteered, to assist with the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Dr. MacDonald demonstrates it is not just people we need but their expertise, their years of experience, their personal connection to others, and their historic understanding of "how things work" to assist us in moving through and past the pandemic.

Most recently she is working in a leadership role with the AHS Acute Care Outbreak Task force. She is past chair of Alberta's Advisory Committee on Immunization and a champion of primary prevention for communities. We have been so fortunate to have her working with us in 2020.

Thank you, Dr. MacDonald, for your dedication and care for Albertans.

Doc of the Week Call for Nominations

Do you know a physician who has gone above and beyond during the pandemic to shape and drive improvements for patients?

Perhaps a physician colleague has gone above and beyond to help support others during a difficult day?

Each week, we would like to take a moment to celebrate and thank the amazing physicians working across the province to provide high-quality care to patients, staff and colleagues across the province.

If you know someone who deserves to be celebrated, please email CMO@ahs.ca with your suggestion, and a brief description of why.

ABTraceTogether Available on AHS Mobile Phones

To make contact tracing easier and help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the ABTraceTogether app will be installed on most AHS-owned mobile phones on Dec. 22.

ABTraceTogether is a mobile app developed by the Alberta government to enable community-driven contact tracing to support efforts to manage COVID-19.

Using the ABTraceTogether app is entirely voluntary and while it will show up on most AHS-owned mobile phones, it will remain inactive until users complete steps to register and activate it. If they choose to use the app, they must take the steps to register the app and turn it on for it to function. It can also be turned off whenever the user decides.

Given the increasing pressure on the system related to managing COVID-19 positive individuals, we want to do all we can to support contact tracing. Quickly identifying and isolating positive cases is an important part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in preventing the spread.

If your AHS-owned mobile phone does not automatically receive the app and you'd like to use it, you can download it and find more detailed information about ABTraceTogether on the [Government of Alberta website](#). You can also find more information about the app and how it works in these [Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#).

Recommended Resource: Working out of scope of practice

For physicians who have questions around scope of practice during the pandemic, please visit [CPSA](#) and [CMPA](#).

Updated COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook

Version three of the [COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook](#) was recently published, with updated guidance to ensure proper safety, cleaning and physical distancing measures are being implemented consistently across AHS.

The updated version also includes additional resources on managing and supporting remote workers. Staff and physicians who are able to work from home are asked to continue doing so until further notice.

Please review the playbook as needed to ensure your workplace continues to meet the proper health and safety requirements, so that we can keep our patients, physicians and staff safe.

If you have questions or feedback about the updated playbook, please email COVIDRelaunch@ahs.ca.

Influenza Immunization Update

More than 1.4 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta, an increase of more than 85,000 doses from last week.

For the eighth week in row, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta.

The weekly influenza data report is available at ahs.ca/influenza.

Check [Insite](#) for options to get the flu shot, [resources](#) to support this year's campaign and guidance on what to do if you experience [influenza-like symptoms after immunization](#).

[Click here](#) for more on the clinics for the public, including your families.

Reminder: Please complete your "Got My Flu Shot" Influenza Immunization Form

If you got your flu shot at a [public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please remember to complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#). This online form can be submitted with just the click of a button.

More than ever, it's still so important that we continue to work together to protect ourselves and others from influenza-like illness. Check out [Insite](#) for options to get the flu shot, [immunization rates](#) for your area and guidance on what to do if you experience [influenza-like symptoms after immunization](#). You can also read blogs from advocates for the flu vaccine, available [here](#).

This continues to be a great start to the season. Let's continue to work together to protect each other from a vaccine-preventable illness and reduce the strain on our healthcare system.

Remember to unplug seasonal decorations

For those who aren't working from home, before heading home during the holidays, please remember to unplug your seasonal decorations, personal appliances and electronics.

Please leave your IT devices and equipment powered and running, with the exception of your computer monitor/screen.

Taking these small actions any time you are away from your worksite will help secure AHS information, reduce the risk of fire from powered and unsupervised devices and help us save energy.

Additional Resources for Physicians:

- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria](#)
- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [CPSA's physician portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [How to Access AHS Insite and Email](#)
- [How to do a Nasopharyngeal \(NP\) Swab](#) (New England Journal of Medicine)
- [IPC Emerging Issues](#)
- [Online Healthcare Worker Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Physician & Family Support Program](#) - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- [Spectrum](#) – A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- COVID-19 Questions? Contact your local Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC):
 - ZEOC.South@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca
 - PCH.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca

For more information

- Visit the [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page](#) on the AHS website for more information or contact AHS.ECC@ahs.ca.
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).
- AHS Medical Staff can also view the daily update from the AHS CEO and Senior Medical Officer of Health (SMOH) by accessing their AHS email inbox.

This update, provided every Friday, is intended to provide a summary of the key action items, information and decisions for AHS Medical Staff in relation to clinical policies and practices, and for the COVID-19 pandemic response. It is forwarded to physicians' preferred email inbox.

Do you have COVID-19 questions, information, or a physician or team who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic, that you would like to see covered in an upcoming edition of the COVID-19 CMO update? Let us know at CMO@ahs.ca.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dr. Francois Belanger

Vice President, Quality, and Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

