

CMO SMOH Weekly Notice for AHS Medical Staff

December 31, 2020

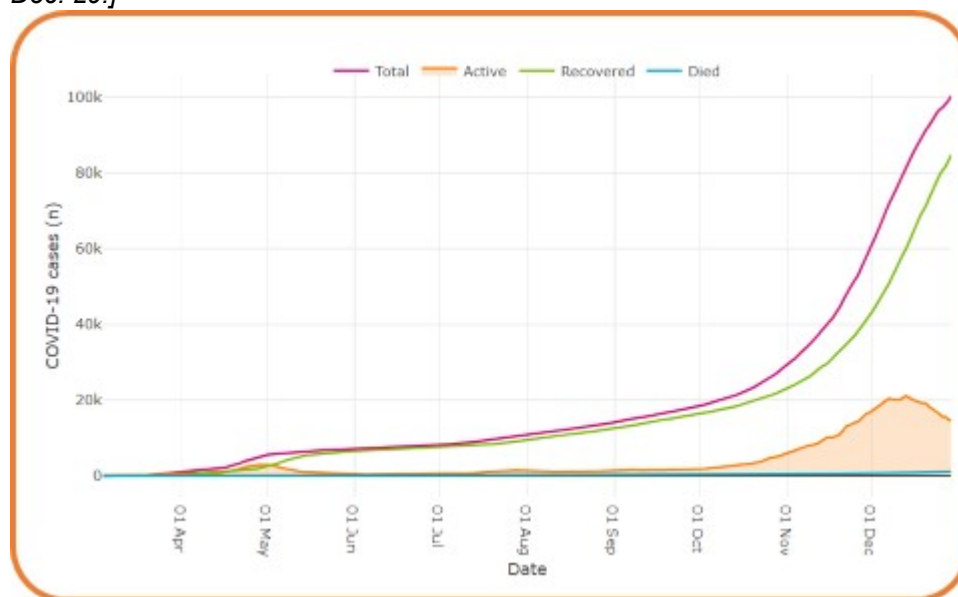
This week:

- COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta **Update**
- First Member of the Public Receives Vaccine in Alberta as Rollout Plan is Updated **New**
- Online COVID-19 Immunization Appointment Booking Tool and Recruiting Immunizers **New**
- Doc of the Week **New**
- Verna's Weekly Video Message – Role of Advisory Councils **New**
- Physician Diversity, Wellness and Leadership Development **Reminder**
- Virtual Health Physician Support for NWT Patients **New**
- Additional Resources for Physicians
- COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers, Influenza Updates **Paused**
- Thank You

COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

For the third consecutive week, the average number of daily new cases of COVID-19 in Alberta has decreased. There was an average of 969 daily new cases for the seven-day period ending on Dec. 29*, compared to 1,318 cases the previous week (Dec. 16 to 22), a 26 per cent decrease. Although this decrease in the average number of daily new cases is positive, it is in-part a reflection of the reduced amount of testing taking place over the holidays. The Edmonton Zone had the largest number of new cases this week at 3,008 (44 per cent of all new cases in the province), followed by the Calgary Zone with 2,190 new cases this week (32 per cent of all new cases in the province).

*[*Note: Usually, the numbers provided in this weekly update capture a seven-day period from Thursday of the previous week to Wednesday of the present week. However, due to the winter holidays, the numbers in the current update represent the seven-day period from Wednesday, Dec. 23 to Tuesday, Dec. 29.]*

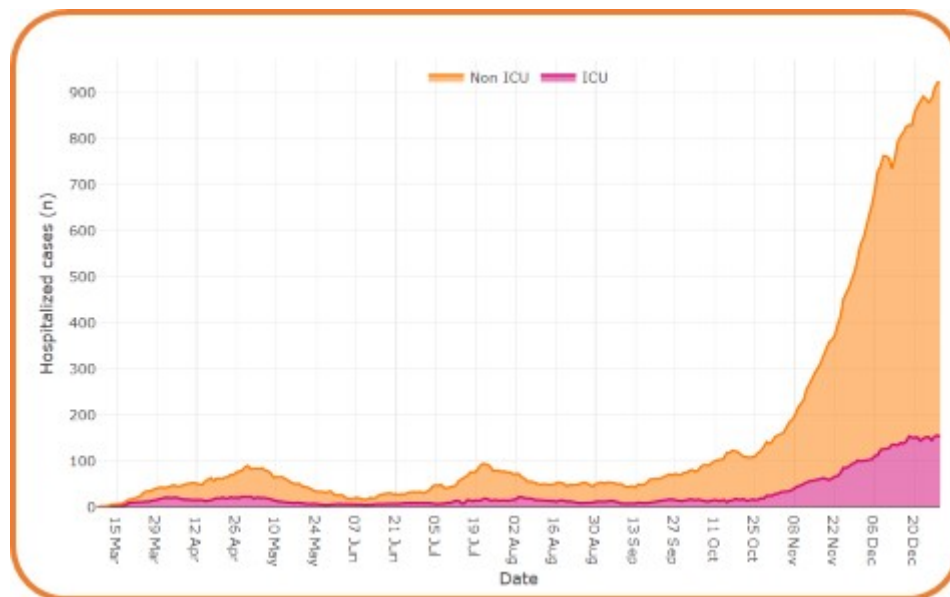


From Dec. 23 to Dec. 29, there were 3,412 cases among individuals aged 20 to 49 years, which is 50 per cent of all new cases during that time period. However, cases continue to occur in every age group; this week, 928 new cases were reported among school aged children (5 to 19 years) and 1,292 new cases were reported among older adults (aged 60 years and older).

As of Dec. 29, there are 14,555 active cases in the province, whereas one week earlier on Dec. 22 there were 17,821 active cases in the province; this is a decrease of 3,266 active cases. While the Edmonton Zone continues to have the most active cases with 6,624 this week, overall the number of active cases decreased from the previous week by over 20 per cent for Edmonton, Calgary and South zones. The North Zone had a smaller decrease in the number of active cases (-5.6 per cent) and Central Zone had a small increase in the number of active cases (2.8 per cent). A full breakdown of the number of active cases on Dec. 29 compared to Dec. 22 for each zone is presented below:

	Active Cases (week ending Dec. 29)*	Active Cases (week ending Dec. 22)	Per cent Change
Edmonton	6,624	8,427	-21.4%
Calgary	5,129	6,470	-20.7%
Central	1,430	1,391	2.8%
North	1,031	1,092	-5.6%
South	296	390	-24.1%
Unknown	45	51	-11.8%

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions



Although new and active case numbers have been decreasing, the number of individuals being treated for COVID-19 in Alberta hospitals continues to trend upward. On Dec. 29, there was a record of 921 individuals being treated for COVID-19 in Alberta hospitals, with 152 of those in intensive care units (ICUs) and 769 in non-ICUs. One week earlier on Dec. 22, there were 821 total hospitalizations, which is a 12 per cent increase in total hospitalizations this week. The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Dec. 29 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
Edmonton	515	83
Calgary	242	50
Central	94	12
North	57	4
South	13	3

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- On Dec. 29, Alberta surpassed 100,000 cases of COVID-19 confirmed in the province, with a total of 100,428 cases and a total of 3,687 individuals having been hospitalized, which amounts to 3.7 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 84,827 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- Alberta reached a grim milestone this week, reaching 1,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic. As of Dec. 29, 1,046 individuals have passed away from COVID-19 including 156 in the previous week (since Dec. 22). We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- From Dec. 23 to Dec. 29, 89,884 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 12,840 per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 6.41 per cent to 9.55 per cent. As of Dec. 29, a total of 2,780,732 tests have been conducted and 1,650,655 individuals have been tested.

First Member of the Public Receives Vaccine in Alberta as Rollout Plan is Updated

On December 30, Sheila Veeder, a resident at Riverview Long Term Care Centre in Medicine Hat, was the first member of the public to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in Alberta.



Veeder is one of thousands of Albertans living at a long-term care (LTC) or designated supportive living (DSL) site, identified to receive COVID-19 immunization during Phase 1A of the vaccine rollout. Residents in all LTC and DSL sites are included in this initial rollout and AHS will work with sites over the coming weeks to support on-site vaccine delivery.

The arrival of 16,900 doses of Moderna vaccine in Alberta yesterday is making it easier for AHS to start to bring the vaccine to the bedsides of thousands, immunizing long-term care and designated supportive living residents where they live.

In an effort to immunize as many Albertans against COVID-19 as quickly as possible, effective December 30, under the direction of Alberta Health, AHS will no longer hold second doses of existing Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine stock on reserve from the shipments we have received to date, but will provide at least one of the two required doses to as many Albertans as possible.

The first 3,900 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine that arrived in Alberta earlier this month were cleared for immediate single dose use, but some of the 25,350 additional Pfizer-BioNTech doses were held back to ensure second doses would be available because future shipments were unknown.

As of 3 p.m. December 31, more than 12,000 healthcare workers have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, as well more than 800 long term care/supportive living residents. With these changes now in effect, we expect this number to rapidly increase.

AHS has now moved from Early Phase 1 of COVID-19 vaccine delivery to Phase 1A, which was originally scheduled to begin January 2021, meaning we are going to provide more vaccine to more Albertans, faster.

As of December 30, the following groups in Alberta are eligible for COVID-19 vaccine:

Phase 1A Groups

- Respiratory therapists*
- Healthcare workers in intensive care units*
- Staff in long term care and designated supportive living facilities*
- Home care workers

- Healthcare workers in emergency departments
 - All residents of long term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL), regardless of age
- * Designates groups included in Early Phase 1 as well as Phase 1A.

This change was also supported by the decision by Pfizer on December 22 to allow its product to be moved from designated freezer sites so it can be delivered in LTC/DSL facilities which increased the feasibility of vaccinating LTC and DSL residents where they live.

Assuming vaccine delivery remains as scheduled, everyone in the six groups listed above will have an opportunity to receive at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine before the end of January 2021.

To effectively allocate the vaccine in our province right now, Alberta continues to take a phased approach to offer immunization to specific populations who are being impacted the hardest by COVID-19, including residents of long term care and designated supportive living sites, and the care teams who could transmit COVID-19 to them, as well as the healthcare workers most needed to ensure workforce capacity.

We know that many of you have questions about when you will be considered eligible to receive immunization. We recognize that many staff, physicians and healthcare partners work with COVID-19-positive and higher risk patients who are vulnerable to COVID-19 and we greatly appreciate the vital work you do.

We continue to carefully consider all groups and criteria to ensure COVID-19 vaccine is appropriately distributed the moment it arrives and are committed to transparently communicating all decisions about the immunization rollout as soon as they are known. All AHS staff, physicians and partners will have an opportunity to be vaccinated in the weeks and months to come as more vaccine supply becomes available.

AHS will continue to directly contact all Phase 1A staff and physicians who are eligible to receive the vaccine to set up appointment bookings. We ask that you answer any phone calls you receive from AHS so you do not delay booking your immunization appointment.

Online COVID-19 Immunization Appointment Booking Tool and Recruiting Immunizers

Starting January 4, AHS will launch a new online booking tool that will allow eligible healthcare workers to book their COVID-19 immunization appointments online from their phones or computers.

AHS staff and physicians deemed eligible to receive the COVID-19 immunization during this phase of the rollout will begin to receive an email with a unique link to go online and book their appointment to get immunized. Emails will go out in stages, based on vaccine availability across the immunization locations. If you do not receive an email right away, please be patient and do not call Health Link. We anticipate immunization booking emails to go out to eligible staff over a number of days based on vaccine availability.

The link provided to each eligible healthcare worker is a one-time link that will no longer be valid after an appointment is booked. This is put in place to help ensure people are being booked in for their immunizations at the right time, based on the criteria outlined by Alberta Health.

The online booking tool provides identified healthcare workers with options to choose a preferred time, date and location to receive their immunization. The tool also ensures the healthcare worker books a second dose within the allowable date range. Please note that although the online booking tool

facilitates the second dose booking, it is possible your second dose appointment may have to be rescheduled based on vaccine availability. If that is the case, you will be contacted by AHS and given instructions about how to rebook for a later date.

The booking tool will help speed up our immunization process and contribute to our goal of getting more Albertans immunized faster. More details will be available at ahs.ca/covidvaccine next week.

With supply becoming more available and delivery schedules being firmer, AHS is doing everything possible to immunize as many people as possible with the available vaccines, including vaccinating on New Year's Day. Immunizations are taking place across every zone, every day.

To ensure we are able to provide COVID-19 immunization to as many Albertans as quickly as possible, AHS is actively recruiting additional staff to join our team of immunizers. In addition to our public health immunizers, we are also actively recruiting other groups such as healthcare providers, healthcare retirees, undergraduate nurses and community pharmacists to provide immunizations across the province.

This will assist in the provincial rollout of vaccine and help us meet our targets of immunizing as many Albertans as quickly as possible.

We cannot thank our healthcare teams enough for all of their hard work and dedication. We especially want to recognize the many staff and physicians involved in the COVID-19 immunization rollout and sincerely appreciate the long hours and commitments you are making to help protect our staff, patients and public against COVID-19.

For Physicians

*If you are a physician in early Phase 1, phone calls continue to be made to book appointments. Phase 1A calls have just started. Given the number of individual healthcare workers being contacted, it does take some time for everyone on lists to be called. These calls are made using phone numbers provided by physicians to Medical Affairs through the Annual Information Verification and Attestation (AIVA) process.

Since there are some physicians in early Phase 1 and Phase 1A that we cannot 100 per cent confirm were successfully contacted by phone, these physicians will still also receive an email with an individual link to allow online booking. The email will be sent to the preferred email address provided by each physician to Medical Affairs through the AIVA process (the same address where this weekly Update is sent). If you have already been contacted by phone about an appointment, you can ignore the email. If you haven't been contacted by phone, you will be able to book your appointment at your convenience once you receive the email.

If you are called to book an appointment but no longer work in the specific area that is targeted, please respectfully defer the booking until later in the process.

What is next - the following vaccinations are coming soon:

*Timeline will be shared as it becomes available.

- Phase 1B: Healthcare workers in medical, surgical and COVID-19 units or ORs

When Phase 1B vaccination booking starts, Phase 1B physicians will receive emails to their preferred email address supplied to Medical Affairs.

If you do not receive a call or email to book your appointment, please do not call Health Link, as Health Link is not responsible for determining vaccine allocation.

Eligible, but not sure if you're on a list, or haven't been contacted?

If you believe you are part of the Early Phase 1 group and have not been contacted or you are part of Phase 1A and have not been contacted by January 10, please follow-up with your medical leader or email cmo@ahs.ca, and include the following information:

- Subject line: Vaccine Intake
- Your first and last name
- Primary medical specialty
- A direct phone number to be reached at if we require further information
- Zone
- Site(s) where you provide healthcare services related to Early Phase 1

In collaboration with a broad AHS COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, a Physician COVID-19 working group has been assembled to help ensure AHS and community physicians from across the province can provide input to help determine the sequencing of vaccine distribution to physician groups. The group also meets to discuss questions and concerns from physician groups, and align provincial vaccine distribution guidelines. If you have questions or concerns that you would like to be brought to this group, please reach out to your medical leader.

Docs of the Week – U of C and AHS Calgary Zone Department of Medicine Acute Care Site Leads

The University of Calgary, and AHS Calgary Zone Department of Medicine Acute Care Site Leads (Drs. Mitesh Thakrar, Caley Shukalek, Anna Purdy, Leanne Reimche and Ward Flemons), have dedicated significant time and hard-work in fall 2020 to prepare and implement COVID-19 inpatient medical teams within the four Calgary adult hospitals.

This work has included leading in the planning and operationalizing of the COVID-19 physician team structure at their sites, as well as supporting the COVID-19 team volunteers and keeping them informed.

They have provided a calming influence, creating organization in a time of chaos. Their leadership and commitment to AHS and Albertans is inspirational.

Thank you, Drs. Mitesh Thakrar, Caley Shukalek, Anna Purdy, Leanne Reimche and Ward Flemons, for your dedication and compassion to your teams as well as the patients and families you care for.

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.

Verna's Weekly Video Message – Role of Advisory Councils

It will take all of us working together to get through this pandemic. Not just AHS staff, physicians and volunteers, but all Albertans across the province.

In these times, we are grateful for our advisory councils, as they are one of our best channels for connecting with Albertans.

Advisory councils are comprised of community members across Alberta who bring grassroots advice from their communities to AHS, and their work continues to be invaluable during this pandemic.

Joining Verna to tell us more about the role of advisory councils and their members are:

- Jen Kneller, Chair, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Provincial Advisory Council.
- Carole Tkach, Chair, David Thompson Health Advisory Council.

[Watch](#) as Jen and Carole discuss the difference between the health advisory and provincial advisory councils, how COVID has impacted their work, and what is in store for the councils in 2021.

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](#).

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](#)

Virtual Health Physician Support for NWT Patients

To facilitate care via Virtual Health (telemedicine) during the COVID-19 pandemic, Albertan physicians are exempt from Northwest Territories (NWT) licensing and exemption requirements for the provision of telemedicine to patients residing in the NWT.

Physicians must be in good standing on the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta's (CPSA) general register and have a referral for the care of a patient in the NWT from a NWT physician.

Physicians meeting these criteria should contact the CMPA to ensure their coverage extends to the NWT. For more information, please see the [NWT Health and Social Services Authority website](#).

Paused COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers, Influenza Updates

Due to the holidays, our COVID-19 healthcare worker testing [dashboard](#) and influenza updates have been paused until the new year.

Our annual influenza immunization campaign continues.

For staff, 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](#).

More on clinics for the public, including your families, is available on the [AHS website](#).

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.

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.

Thank You

We have all come through a year filled with both challenges and successes. As 2020 winds down, and we look ahead to the work that we must continue to do to stay safe during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, we are taking time to reflect back on what we are most grateful for, and without a doubt what we are most grateful for, is you.

We would like to express our gratitude to you, as frontline workers, who are caring for, and giving strength to so many.

Thank you for the outstanding, inspirational, dedicated work that you have done for Albertans, and your colleagues through this difficult year. We wish health and happiness to you and your families into 2021.

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. Debrah Wirtzfeld on behalf of Dr. Francois Belanger

Associate Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health