

CMO SMOH Weekly Notice for AHS Medical Staff

January 22, 2021

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COVID-19 Immunization Resources to Bookmark

- [AHS Immunization Information](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#): Includes immunization updates
- [Government of Alberta Immunization Updates](#)

For more information about COVID-19 immunization, common side effects and recommendations on use, please visit National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) [website](#). Please see the [AHS immunization website](#) for ongoing updates as they become available.

For AHS Medical Staff questions, please email cmo@ahs.ca.

For all other AHS staff inquiries, please email AHSVaccineTaskforce@ahs.ca.

COVID-19 Immunization Update – Sequencing and Appointment Rescheduling

Since the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine began in December, we have been receiving questions from staff, physicians, partners and the public on COVID-19 immunization sequencing: who will be immunized when, in what order, and why some groups are chosen to go before others. While we truly wish that everyone could be immunized right away, the reality is that it’s going to take many months to make it happen.

Vaccine supply is the major issue we face right now. There is not enough vaccine available to immunize our entire workforce, so tough decisions have to be made about sequencing the vaccine rollout. These decisions have been and continue to be made with careful consideration. For background on immunization sequencing, rationale, and insight into the immunization rollout process, visit ahs.ca/covidvaccine.

To be fully immunized against COVID-19, two doses of vaccine are required. Right now, there are more than 80,000 people in Alberta who received a first dose of vaccine and require a second dose, and 21,000 people who are eligible as part of Phase 1 who still need to receive a first dose.

Because COVID-19 vaccine supply over the next few weeks will continue to be unpredictable, we are allocating the vaccine we do have to healthcare workers who require a second dose within the allowable window of 38-42 days, while continuing to offer immunization to long-term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) residents.

As a result, all first-dose appointments for staff and physicians continue to be postponed. Second-dose appointments for staff and physicians are being rescheduled, with more than 30,000 notifications going out today. Anyone whose appointment is being postponed or rescheduled will be contacted directly by AHS via email, text or phone call. Please do not call Health Link. In some instances, this may mean moving an appointment just a few days. Every day is critical to our current vaccine supply to ensure all Albertans, including residents of LTC/DSL, can be immunized according to the recommended timelines. (The allowable window for the second dose for LTC/DSL residents is 28 days.)

We ask for your continued co-operation and understanding, and also your respect and kindness as we work diligently to immunize as many people as possible as quickly as possible, with available product.

We will continue to communicate openly and transparently, and appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through details.

PPE Question of the Week — Do I Still Need to Wear PPE if I Already Received the COVID-19 Vaccine?

Many staff and physicians have asked if they're required to wear PPE and perform daily fit for work screening once they've had their two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. The answer is yes.

In the latest [PPE Question of the Week video](#), Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos — Medical Director of Workplace Health and Safety — explains why it's essential that staff and physicians continue to adhere to PPE guidance and ensure all IPC recommendations for COVID-19 are followed, even after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.

Complete your Annual Information Verification and Attestation (AIVA)

Over 3,000 physicians have already completed their AIVA through the new online submission process.

The submission is quick, taking less than five minutes to complete, and can be done on a smart phone, tablet or computer.

If you experience technical issues, please contact local Medical Affairs office or email AIVA@ahs.ca.

Doc of the Week – Dr. Francois Dewet Dowling

Dr. Dowling (Dewet) is the Facility Medical Director for the Rocky Mountain House Health Centre.

Dr. Dowling has tirelessly provided leadership and mentorship to his colleagues throughout the pandemic. He has gone above and beyond the call of duty to advocate for local physicians and nursing staff for safety, PPE, work conditions, access to testing, and workload relief.

Dr. Dowling has always maintained a calm, supportive demeanor which sets the tone for the whole health care team. Our team is forever grateful for his leadership.

We sincerely thank you, Dr. Dowling, for your care and support to your colleagues and patients.

Physician Wellness

Physician Wellness Zoom Room

Date: Tuesday, January 26, 5-6 p.m.

Topic of focus: Resilience

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

Zoom Link: [Here](#)

Community Bulletin Board

Well Doc Alberta recently launched a [Community Bulletin Board](#) to share information about physician wellness related events, or research and quality insurance initiatives. They invite you to submit postings to this. You can access this Community Bulletin Board [here](#).

They also are offering [Physician Peer Support Training](#) for physician groups who want to develop a formalized peer support team.

COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

This past week, many of our COVID-19 numbers continued to trend downward, with the province now reporting the fewest active cases since mid-November. However, our health system continues to experience significant strain and, as such, the Government of Alberta Thursday did not ease any of the current public health measures.

There was an average of 645 daily new cases for the seven-day period ending Jan. 20, compared to 876 the previous week, a 26.4 per cent decrease. As of Jan. 20, there were 10,256 active cases in the province, compared to 12,538 on Jan. 13, an 18.2 per cent decrease.

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

	Active Cases (as of Jan. 20)	Active Cases (as of Jan. 13)	Per cent Change
Calgary	3,962	4,691	-15.5%
Edmonton	3,561	4,570	-22.1%
North	1,383	1,635	-15.4%
Central	931	1,152	-19.2%
South	405	362	+11.9%
Unknown	14	24	-41.7%

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

On Jan. 20, there were 726 individuals with COVID-19 in hospitals across the province compared to 806 Jan. 13, a 9.9 per cent decrease. Also on Jan. 20, there were 119 individuals in intensive care compared on Jan. 13, a 12.5 per cent decrease.

The Edmonton and Central zones reported the largest hospitalization decreases: 61 fewer patients in Edmonton Zone, a 15 per cent decrease, and 19 fewer patients in the Central Zone, a 24.5 per cent decrease.

The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Jan. 13 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
Edmonton	348	44
Calgary	216	53
North	75	8
Central	58	9
South	29	5

Other notable COVID-19-related information

- As of Jan. 20, a total of 119,114 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and 5,125 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.3 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 107,358 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of Jan. 20, 1,500 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 111 over the past seven days. 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 Jan. 14 to Jan. 20, 83,354 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 11,908 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 4.58 per cent to 6.63 per cent. As of Jan. 20, a total of 3,066,222 tests have been conducted and 1,726,667 individuals have been tested.
- All of the school outbreaks for the fall school term were closed as per direction from Alberta Health. For the winter school term, as of Jan. 21, AHS has confirmed 282 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 182 out of 2,415 schools in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

COVID-19 testing for healthcare workers — the latest numbers

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 January 20:

- 75,133 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,275 (or 5.69 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 1,238 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 413 (or 33.4 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 3,037 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,841 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 187 (or 3.86 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 49 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 8 (or 16.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 138 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

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

Influenza Immunization Update

As of Jan. 16, 1,518,893 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. This is the highest uptake of influenza vaccine recorded in our province over the past 10 years and nearly double that of the 2010-2011 influenza season.

For the 11th consecutive week, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta. Alberta Precision Laboratories have tested more than 86,000 respiratory swabs for influenza since Aug. 23.

The low case count for influenza can be attributed to multiple factors, including the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and public health guidelines currently in place that encourage enhanced respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene and physical distancing.

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

Reminder – Virtual Care Appointment Bookings

Please encourage your teams to continue to use Zoom or telephone instead of traditional Telehealth whenever possible.

Reducing the use of Telehealth helps to reduce exposure to COVID-19.

Every Telehealth appointment booked creates an ambulatory visit at the remote site, which are experiencing high volumes of COVID-19-related cases.

It is recognized that some visits require the ongoing use of traditional Telehealth to provide safe and effective care. Some instances where Telehealth may still be the best option include:

- Requiring technology available through Telehealth rooms, such as high definition cameras
- The care team at the remote site is already providing care and will be able to accommodate the Telehealth visit as part of the already scheduled visit (e.g., cancer care)
- The patient does not have access to technology that would enable the use of Zoom or telephone visits (e.g., they do not have a phone or computer/tablet, or limited Wi-Fi in rural areas)

If teams or providers are struggling to implement or effectively utilize Zoom, please see the available resources on the [Virtual Health Page on Insite](#) or reach out to the Virtual Health team at virtualhealth.info@ahs.ca. There are also Zoom for Virtual Health Office Hours once a month where people can bring questions and learn more.

Save the Date — President’s Speaker Series returns Feb. 1

On Feb. 1 from noon to 1 p.m., you’re invited to join an online discussion on applied artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare at the [President’s Speaker Series](#).

Recent developments in AI are transforming society, from retail giants such as Amazon to the use of self-driving cars in the transportation industry. Healthcare is no exception and is among the most data-rich industries. We can expect the way we use that data, along with virtual care and AI, to greatly expand in the future.

Our keynote speaker is Muhammad Mamdani, Vice President - Data Science and Advanced Analytics, Unity Health Toronto, and director of the Li Ka Shing Centre for Healthcare Analytics Research & Training.

In his presentation, Muhammad will provide an overview of the concept of AI, its applications in healthcare, and its implications for clinicians and healthcare administrators in the future.

Email pss@ahs.ca to register.

Gratitude from Albertans

Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to all Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep pouring in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We want to share a few recent messages of thanks with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

My family is thinking of you every day and we are truly grateful. I can only imagine how difficult this year has been. Please know our family has limited our contacts since March, we get most things delivered and, when we can’t, we wear our masks (we still wipe down groceries!) We do this not just to avoid getting sick but out of respect for our community and healthcare workers. No COVID-19 fatigue in

our home! Know that we have not given up and count on you to not give up, too. You are important and what you do matters.

— the Twordik Family, Calgary

Thank you for all you do every day to provide care and services for Albertans at this difficult time. I have the greatest respect for my nursing colleagues and all members of the healthcare and support teams. Your jobs are so challenging and you are truly heroes in my view. I recognize that these times are taking a physical, mental and emotional toll on you and your families. Please take some time, if possible, to care for yourself and to connect with others (who) love and care for you. Your health and well-being is so important and you are valued and truly appreciated.

— Dianne

A huge special thank you to all of the dedicated Alberta Health Services employees and contracted agencies who are working so hard to deliver the highest quality care possible. Because of you, we are a better, stronger province. We are grateful.

— Eric

You are the front line against COVID-19 and have been working so hard since the pandemic began. Both physically and mentally, you have and still go through so much each and every day. We thank you for your selfless dedication and devotion to your work and to the Albertans you help each and every day. People from all walks of life owe you big time. Take care and stay safe.

— Rob

Additional Resources for Physicians:

- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [AHS Vaccine Information](#)
- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#): Includes vaccination updates
- [COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria](#)
- [CPSA's physician portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [Government of Alberta Vaccination Updates](#)
- [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)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- [Spectrum](#) – A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- 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 \(CPSA\)](#).

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. Francois Belanger

Chief Medical Officer and VP, Quality

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

