

CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

November 12, 2021

We would like to recognize that our work takes place on historical and contemporary Indigenous lands, including the territories of Treaties 6, 7 & 8, and the homeland of the Métis. We also acknowledge the many Indigenous communities that have been forged in urban centres across Alberta.

This week:

- Support for Physicians
- MD Culture Shift
- Nov. 15 is the Final Deadline to Submit Proof of Immunization
- Doctor of the Week Call for Nominations
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- Additional Resources for Physicians

As announced by Alberta Health today, starting today, Albertans 18 and older can book appointments to receive the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine by calling Health Link at 811. Due to limited supply, the Janssen vaccine will only be administered at AHS clinics in select locations across the province.

At this time, only one dose of the Janssen vaccine is needed to be fully immunized.

Healthcare workers who get one dose and submit their proof of immunization by Nov. 15. will be considered compliant with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#). (See more on the deadline in an item below.)

Albertans who choose the Janssen vaccine are eligible for a booster dose of an mRNA vaccine at least after receiving their first dose. For more information, or to see the full announcement, see the [news rele](#) Alberta Health website.

Support for Physicians

If you are struggling and feel you need support, there are resources available through the [Physician & Family Support Program \(PFSP\)](#).



MD Culture Shift

AHS MD Culture Shift Community of Practice

The first session will be focused on an introduction to the portfolio of diversity, wellness and leadership development with an introduction to trauma informed leadership. This session will include interactive co-design to guide future topics.

- Date: Nov. 24
- Time: 7-8:30 p.m.
- [Zoom Meeting](#)
- Passcode: 603079

Wellness

Don't forget to complete the [Canadian Medical Association \(CMA\) National Physician Health Survey](#). By taking part in the survey and sharing your experiences, you will help the CMA, and other stakeholders, identify the individual- and system-level changes needed to better support physicians, create a healthier medical culture and guide the country's post-pandemic recovery.

CMA Wellness Connection

- [Compassion Rounds - Blue Zones](#): Nov. 11, 7 a.m.
- [Preventing and Overcoming Burnout - Bringing Back Social Connection](#): Nov. 18, 12 p.m.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Effective Allyship: Advancing women in healthcare leadership.

With expertise and experience, panelists will share practical tips on how to be a good ally to advance women in healthcare leadership in this free webinar hosted by Equity in Medicine and Sanokundu.

Panelists:

- Dr. Javeed Sukhera
- Dr. Marcia Anderson
- Dr. Matthew Chow
- Dr. Pauline Alakija
- Dr. Dennis Kendel
- Dr. Kim Kelly

November 23, 6 p.m.

Registration: [Here](#)

Nov. 15 is the Final Deadline to Submit Proof of Immunization

If you are fully immunized, now is the time to submit your [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#).

Workers are reminded that they have until **Nov. 15** to submit their proof of immunization for COVID-19. All employees, medical and midwifery staff, students, volunteers and contracted healthcare providers must be fully immunized by **Nov. 30** to comply with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#). If you have challenges submitting the online form, contact Workplace Health and Safety at COVID19Immunization@ahs.ca.

As a reminder, a booster shot is not required to be considered fully immunized for the purpose of this policy, which is aligned with Alberta Health's guidance at this time. You do not need to re-submit the online form after receiving a booster.

See the latest [staff FAQ](#) for more information. Additional supports and resources can be found on [Insite](#).

Doctor of the Week Call for Nominations

Doctor of the Week shows the people, faces and stories of the physicians caring for patients across Alberta Health Services. Physicians for this feature are nominated by their colleagues. Contact cmo@ahs.ca to nominate a physician to be featured here.

Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update

COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

ICU Capacity Update

AHS continues to do all it can to ensure we have enough ICU capacity to meet patient demand.

With pressure easing slightly on our ICUs, we are reducing the available surge beds, so we can redeploy staff to caring for non-COVID-19 patients who need surgeries and procedures.

We will maintain ICU capacity above daily demand to a planned maximum of 380 beds as long as staff and physician availability allows, and will readjust our plans as needed if COVID-19 cases rise again.

We currently have 275 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 102 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds.

As of 10 a.m. this morning, there were currently 214 patients in ICU, about half of whom are COVID-19 positive.

Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is at 78 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 124 per cent.

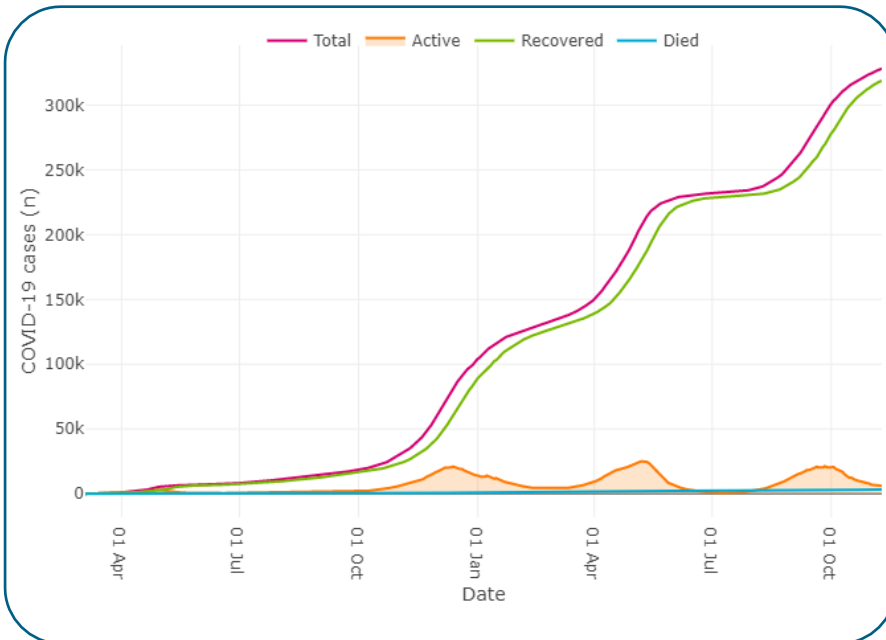
- In Calgary Zone, we currently have 100 ICU beds, including 34 additional spaces. Calgary Zone ICU is operating at 65 per cent of current capacity (including 21 COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In Edmonton Zone, we currently have 114 ICU beds, including 42 additional spaces. Edmonton Zone is operating at 87 per cent of current capacity (including 53 COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In Central Zone, we currently have 20 ICU beds, including eight additional spaces. Central Zone ICU is operating at 85 per cent of current capacity (including nine COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In South Zone, we currently have 28 ICU beds, including 11 additional ICU spaces. South Zone ICU is currently operating at 86 per cent capacity (including 18 COVID-19 patients in ICU).

- In North Zone, we have 13 ICU spaces (split between Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray), including seven additional ICU spaces. North Zone is currently operating at 69 per cent capacity (including six COVID-19 patients in ICU).

New and Active Cases

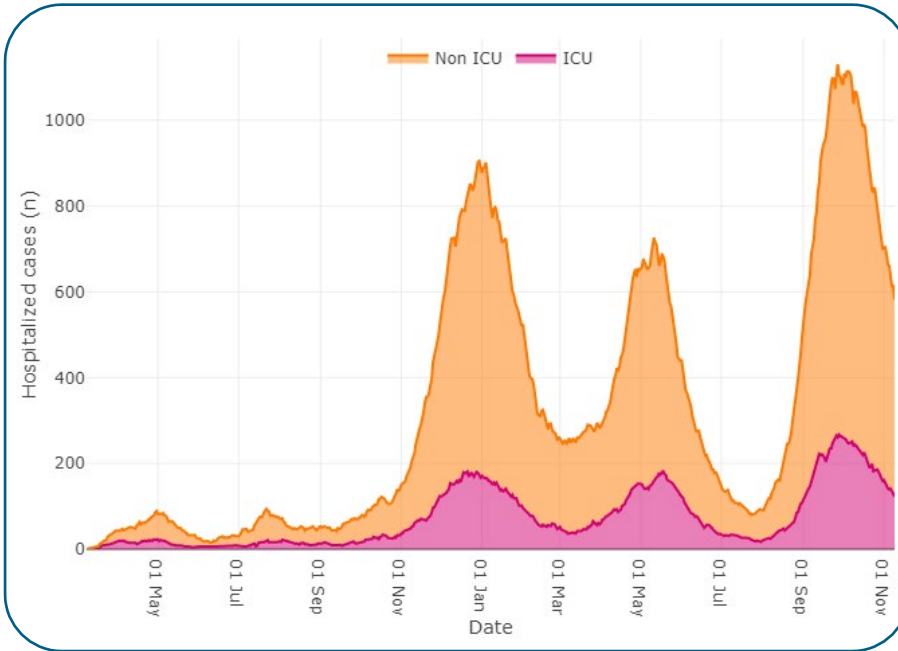
As of Nov. 9, there was an average of 452 new cases of COVID-19 per day, compared to 454 cases per day the previous week (Oct. 28 to Nov. 3). Four out of five zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from a 1.03 per cent decrease in the Edmonton Zone to a 13.6 per cent decrease in both the South and Central zones. Over the past six days, the Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 858 (a six-day average of 143 cases per day), compared to 854 new cases the previous week (a seven-day average of 122 cases per day).

As of Nov. 11, there are 5,745 active cases in Alberta, an 11.8 per cent decrease compared to Nov. 3. Most zones reported a decrease in active cases. For the sixth consecutive week, the Calgary Zone reported the most active cases with 1,777, and was the only zone that did not report a decrease in cases compared to last week.



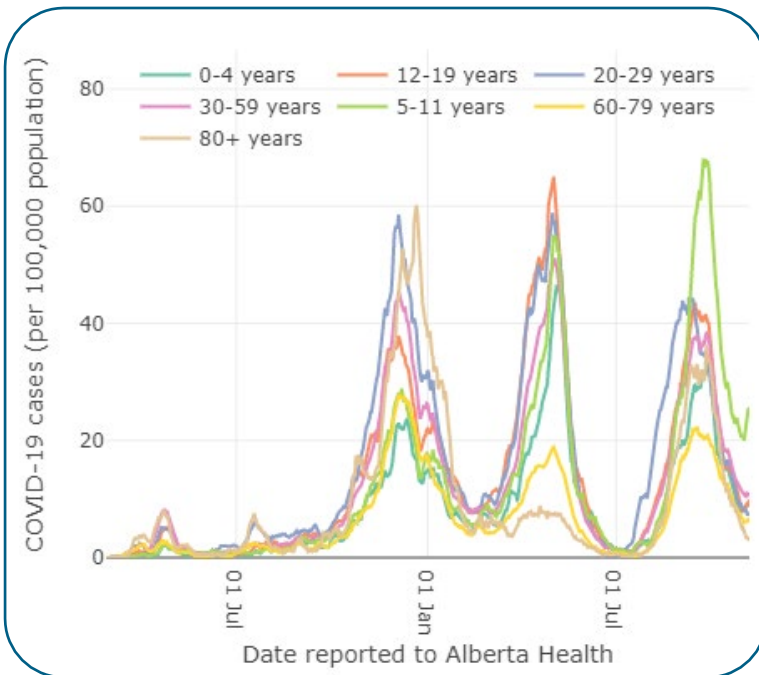
Hospitalizations

On Nov. 9, 459 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19, compared to 540 on Nov. 3; a 15.0 per cent decrease.



Cases by Age Group

As of Nov. 6, children ages five to 11 – who are currently ineligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine – had the highest seven-day rolling average of new daily COVID-19 cases, with 25.6 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans ages 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 10.7 cases per 100,000 people. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are shown below.



Variants of Concern

For variants of concern, the lab is utilizing targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From Nov. 1 to Nov. 7, the average percent of positive samples that were strain-typed was 46 per cent. Of those strain-typed the rolling average was 99.6 per cent Delta variant. The remaining 0.4 per

cent were a wild variant. Strain-typing takes a number of days and these numbers may change as lab data becomes available.

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- As of Nov. 9, a total of 328,189 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 14,634 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.5 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 319,017 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19, meaning they are no longer considered contagious.
- From Nov. 4 to Nov. 9, 56,995 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 9,499 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 4.21 per cent to 5.28 per cent. As of Nov. 9, a total of 5,969,081 tests have been conducted and 2,547,305 individuals have ever been tested.
- As of Nov. 9, 3,164 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 27 deaths over the past week. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- The R value, also known as the reproduction number, describes the ability of a disease to spread. It tells us the average number of people that someone with COVID-19 will infect. An R value of 1 means an infected person will infect one other person on average. Values below 1 mean transmission is decreasing; above 1, transmission is increasing. The R value is updated every two weeks. From October 25 to October 31 the provincewide R value was 0.87 and the previously reported value was 0.85. Alberta Health did not update the R value this week.
- Public reporting of schools continues and you can find more information, [here](#).

COVID-19 Immunization Updates

Other vaccine availability

AstraZeneca

Currently, there is no supply of AstraZeneca in the province but supply is expected later this year. More information will be available at that time.

Novavax

[Novavax Inc.](#) announced the completion of its rolling submission to Health Canada for the authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine, on Nov. 1. Novavax says the filing marks the first protein-based COVID-19 vaccine submission for authorization to regulatory authorities in Canada.

Health Canada is responsible for reviewing and approving vaccines for use in Canada, and for the distribution of vaccines to the provinces. Alberta Health is responsible for provincial vaccine policy setting, vaccine allocation and determining eligibility criteria. To learn more about the vaccine review process, the vaccines currently approved for use in Canada, and the status of vaccines currently under review, visit: [Vaccines and treatments for COVID-19: Progress.](#)

Third doses for eligible populations, including healthcare workers

As of Monday, Nov. 8, third doses of COVID-19 vaccine are available to additional Albertans, including:

- Frontline healthcare workers who provide direct patient care and who had their first two doses of vaccine less than eight weeks apart.
- Adults 18 years of age and older who received two doses of the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine, or one dose of the Janssen vaccine, who have not already received a dose of an mRNA vaccine and are not eligible under other booster dose criteria.
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) adults 18 years of age and older, regardless of where they live.
- Adults aged 70 and older.

These individuals are eligible for a third dose at least six months after their primary series.

At this time, as mentioned above and per Alberta Health's guidance, the booster dose is not required to be considered fully immunized for the purpose of the AHS' Immunization of Workers for COVID 19 Policy.

Healthcare workers will not be contacted by AHS if/when they are eligible to receive an additional dose. Please book your own appointment if/when you are eligible.

In addition to the groups listed above, those previously eligible for an additional dose continue to be eligible. For a full list, visit alberta.ca/vaccine.

Booking is based on the honour system and appointments can be made through the [online booking tool](#), at participating pharmacies and doctor's office, or by calling Health Link at 811. COVID-19 vaccines are also available by walk-in at [participating clinics](#) and pharmacies. Individuals who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve.

At this time, booster doses are not recommended or available for the general population. Vaccines continue to provide strong protection against severe outcomes for the general population. Alberta Health will continue to monitor data and expert advice in this area.

AHS strongly encourages eligible healthcare workers to get their additional dose as soon as they are able.

[Pfizer vaccine for younger age group continues to be reviewed by Health Canada](#)

Health Canada continues to review a submission from Pfizer-BioNTech to authorize use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children five to 11 years of age. The vaccine will only be authorized for use if the independent scientific review of the submission shows the benefits outweigh potential risks in this age group. The assessment will include a review of evolving information about the health impacts of COVID-19 and variants of concern on children in Canada.

As we await approval from Health Canada and decisions from Alberta Health, we are preparing our teams, as well as updating our policies, processes and resources, so AHS can support vaccine rollout in a child- and family-friendly manner. We will also ensure Alberta families have the relevant information they need to inform their decision about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

[No evidence for increase in miscarriages or stillbirths after COVID-19 immunization](#)

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective for those who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant and those who have recently given birth.

As Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Deena Hinshaw said on [Nov. 9](#), there is no evidence miscarriages or stillbirths have increased after COVID-19 vaccines have been made available. Evidence shows there has actually been a slight, but steady reduction in the number of miscarriages in Alberta starting in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and has continued over the following two years.

COVID-19 infection in pregnancy is a risk to both parent and child, and being fully immunized can help protect pregnant individuals from severe outcomes from the virus.

Health Canada and Alberta Health continually monitor information on adverse reactions to ensure vaccine programs are safe and effective.

We encourage anyone who is hesitant about getting immunized to seek out trusted, expert sources for information. This includes talking with your healthcare provider, calling Health Link at 811 to speak with a registered nurse, and exploring resources available:

- [Vaccines, pregnancy and fertility telephone town hall Oct. 27](#)

- For healthcare providers: [Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy – Applying the PrOTCT Framework to Conversations with Patients](#)
- [Vaccine myths and facts](#)
- ahs.ca/vaccinepregnancy

Travel and COVID-19 immunization

As of Nov. 8, the U.S. has reopened its borders to fully immunized travellers and individuals immunized with [any combination of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine \(or a single dose of Janssen\)](#) authorized by U.S. regulators or the World Health Organization – including AstraZeneca.

New Canadian federal vaccine requirements to board a flight, train or ship were implemented at the end of October. From Oct. 30 to Nov. 29, there is a short transition period when travellers who don't yet qualify as fully vaccinated will be able to travel if they can show a valid COVID-19 molecular test taken within 72 hours of travel. More information is available at [COVID-19 Boarding flights and trains in Canada](#).

The Government of Canada is engaging with Indigenous peoples, provinces and territories to ensure travellers from remote communities, who are not fully vaccinated, are still able to travel for any reason. More information is available here: [Proof of vaccination for Indigenous peoples and Northerners in remote communities](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Records with QR Code Required for R.E.P. Nov. 15

Beginning Monday, Nov. 15, COVID-19 vaccine records must include a [QR code](#) in order for Albertans to enter any business or venue taking part in the [Restrictions Exemption Program](#).

Vaccine records without a QR code, including the paper immunization record received at your appointment, will no longer be accepted, with the exception of First Nations and military vaccine documents.

Businesses will use the [AB COVID-19 Records Verifier app](#) to scan your QR code. When scanned, it displays your name, birthdate and vaccination status. It is not connected to other personal info.

If you received your vaccine at an AHS clinic, pharmacy or physician office in Alberta, visit alberta.ca/CovidRecords to get your record with a QR code. Save it to your phone or download it and print it off. If you need assistance accessing or printing your record, visit a [participating registry office](#) where they can print it off for you, or call Health Link at 811 to have your record mailed to you.

If you were recently immunized, it may take up to two weeks for your online records to be updated with the latest dose. If it has been longer than that and there is a dose missing, or there are other issues with your record, visit alberta.ca/CovidRecordsHelp for assistance.

Influenza Immunization Update

As of Nov. 6, 916,184 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered across the province, and three cases of influenza have been confirmed so far this season. Interactive aggregate data on seasonal influenza is now available online at: [Alberta influenza statistics](#).

Although the influenza activity we are seeing right now is less than we would see in a typical season, with changes to public health restrictions and more people travelling, we expect to see influenza and other respiratory viruses circulate in our communities this year.

Now more than ever, we need Albertans to get immunized against influenza, to protect themselves, their families and community. Our healthcare system has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. By keeping the number of influenza cases and outbreaks low, we can protect at-risk Albertans, and reduce the pressure on our healthcare system.

Influenza immunization information for physicians, staff & volunteers

Physicians, staff and volunteers can also choose to be immunized through a site champion at their facility or a roving cart at their site.

Book your appointment using the [AHS Influenza Immunization booking tool](#), or call Health Link at 811. See [Insite](#) for more on the immunization campaign.

Sotrovimab – New Monoclonal Antibody Treatment for COVID-19 Patients

AHS has begun administering a new monoclonal antibody treatment that was recently approved by Health Canada to some COVID-19 patients.

Sotrovimab is a new drug that was developed to treat COVID-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms. It is the first treatment to be offered to outpatients in Alberta and is administered by intravenous infusion within five days of symptom onset.

In phase one of the AHS rollout, treatment will focus on COVID-19 patients who are:

- aged 65 or older and have not received any doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, or
- solid organ transplant patients or stem cell transplant patients, regardless of vaccination status.

In the first phase, [EMS Mobile Integrated Health \(MIH\)](#) will administer sotrovimab by IV infusion in patients' homes or continuing care sites. In Fort McMurray, administration will occur at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre. Patients will receive the IV infusion treatment over one hour, and will be observed for another hour post-treatment. Follow-up will be conducted by a healthcare provider within five days of receiving the treatment.

Patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 and whose symptoms began less than four days ago can call 1-844-343-0971 to find out if they qualify to receive sotrovimab.

Sotrovimab is not a replacement for COVID-19 vaccination. Albertans are strongly encouraged to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This is a treatment that is available to those who are at a higher risk of worsening symptoms from the disease and who may require hospitalization.

For more information about sotrovimab or the phased rollout, please visit ahs.ca/covidopt.

Verna's Weekly Message: A Look Back – and Look Forward – with Nancy Guebert

It's been approximately 20 months since we had our first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Alberta.

Some days, it feels like time has passed in the blink of an eye. Then there are those days when we feel every challenge, big or small, and the collective effort it's taken all of use to get through this pandemic.

But every step of the way, you have persevered and shown remarkable dedication. Some of you have even come back from retirement to lend a hand.

One of those people is Nancy Guebert, who has held numerous leadership roles in her healthcare career. When Verna called Nancy in the spring of 2020 to see if she was interested in un-retiring to join the Emergency Command Centre as director, she didn't hesitate.

As Nancy is re-retiring this week. Verna thought this was a good opportunity to [sit down with her](#) for a bit of a look back, and also talk about what lies ahead.

Beyond COVID-19

Pressure Injury Prevention Webinars Next Week

A pressure injury is damage to the skin and skin tissue from unrelieved pressure. All patients are at risk of a pressure injury, and COVID-19 has further demonstrated the importance of managing this issue to improve patient care.

To learn more about pressure injury prevention, we encourage you to attend the [upcoming webinars](#) from Nov. 17 to Nov. 19.

Approximately one in six patients in Alberta hospitals suffer from a pressure injury, and the majority occur in hospital. Patients who acquire pressure injuries experience a significantly longer stay in hospital.

Nov. 18 is [World Wide Pressure Injury Prevention Day](#) and we encourage you to wear red on this day to raise awareness about pressure injury prevention.

Additional Resources for Physicians:

- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [AHS Immunization Information](#)
- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Community Physicians](#)
- [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.

- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).

This update 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.

Dr. Francois Belanger

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Dr. Laura McDougall

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