



Message from
Dr. Laura McDougall
Senior Medical Officer of Health



COVID-19 Immunization Update

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

To keep staff and stakeholders informed about vaccine rollout progress, AHS will share regular updates over the next several weeks. Information is also available on our [COVID-19 website](#), and will be consolidated in the regular Friday staff emails.

Data

As of 10 a.m. January 5, more than 26,000 Albertans have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, including:

- 12,400+ Health Care Workers
- 9,100+ Long Term Care (LTC) and Designated Supportive Living (DSL) staff
- 4,500+ LTC/DSL residents

Vaccine Wastage

Misinformation is circulating about wastage of the COVID-19 vaccine. Vaccines are a critical way to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. There has been no wastage significant enough to impact immunization numbers. To date, 86 doses of the more than 26,000 doses administered have been considered wasted - only 0.3% of the supply.

All immunization programs have some degree of inadvertent vaccine wastage due to issues such as refrigeration errors, vial breakage, expirations and appointment no-shows. That is expected, but usually minimal. AHS is optimizing the number of appointments to minimize any wastage due to client factors, including overbooking appointments to account for no shows.

Any additional vaccine available at site at the end of the shift are provided to immunizers on site as our second line of defense against wastage.

Alberta Health Services issued a Twitter thread on this topic today. It can be found [here](#).

Alberta Health issued a media statement on this issue which can be found [here](#).

Immunization Phases

AHS is currently in Phase 1A of COVID-19 [vaccine delivery](#), meaning 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)

COVID-19 immunization rollout takes into account groups that have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. This includes older Albertans and in particular those living in long term care and designated supportive living facilities.

Alberta Health identified health care workers, including physicians, to be sequenced with consideration of the extent to which immunizing a particular group would contribute to a combination of the following:

- Reducing acute care demand;
- Protecting critical workforce;
- Enhancing the flow of patients and residents through the system; and
- Preventing COVID-19 outbreaks.

If you are not in the current phase, you are not eligible to receive a vaccine at this time. Please honour the phases; and if you have any questions about the phases, please contact your supervisor or medical leader.

I understand the frustration of those who want to be vaccinated and are not yet eligible. I urge your patience and understanding. We would love to be able to vaccinate everyone who interacts with patients and families immediately. The reality is that it's going to take some time, primarily due to vaccine availability. Risk of transmission within our sites remains very low when staff and physicians wear appropriate PPE. We are doing all we can to keep our teams safe, and will continue to push hard to roll out vaccine as it is available.

Recruitment

AHS has adequate staff numbers needed to immunize Albertans against COVID-19 for the current vaccine supply. To plan ahead and ensure we are able to provide COVID-19 immunization to as many Albertans as quickly as possible as more vaccine becomes available, AHS began recruiting additional staff to join our team of immunizers.

We have received hundreds of expressions of interest from a variety of healthcare professionals and now have enough interest from staff to be able to fill the positions we need to immunize Albertans against COVID-19.

Our vaccination logistics coordinators are working through each expression of interest right now and will follow up with applicants in the coming days. We

sincerely thank everyone who has offered to assist with Alberta's COVID-19 immunization planning.

Ramping up immunizations

AHS is immunizing more Albertans, faster. To continue to increase our pace, we have deployed numerous strategies including:

- **Launching the AHS COVID-19 online immunization booking tool.** Eligible healthcare workers can book their COVID-19 immunization appointments online from their phones or computers. All eligible healthcare workers will receive a direct email to notify that they are eligible. If you receive an email asking you to book an appointment, please go in and book so that we can fill as many available appointments as quickly as possible. Learn more [here](#).
- **Setting up satellite clinics.** AHS Workplace Health and Safety and Public Health have begun deploying immunization champions to large AHS acute care sites with emergency departments to augment the current clinics already scheduled and occurring at the sites. The satellite clinics will provide support to immunizers on the ground, ensuring our eligible staff are immunized as quickly as possible.
- **Expanding immunization appointment availability.** AHS is providing immunizations in evenings, on weekends and also on holidays.
- **Expanding immunization clinics:** AHS is working across every zone to increase our number of immunization locations. We currently have 45 immunization locations across the province and will expand our locations as more vaccine becomes available.

I want to thank everyone for their continued work on the COVID-19 immunization roll out. Thank you for your support and cooperation as we work to rapidly immunize Albertans against COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

