



## Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

### *AHS Update: New and active cases spike, ICU numbers up nearly a third, as province sets new single-day record for immunizations*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

#### Today's Update

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- COVID-19 Immunization Update
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## COVID-19 Status

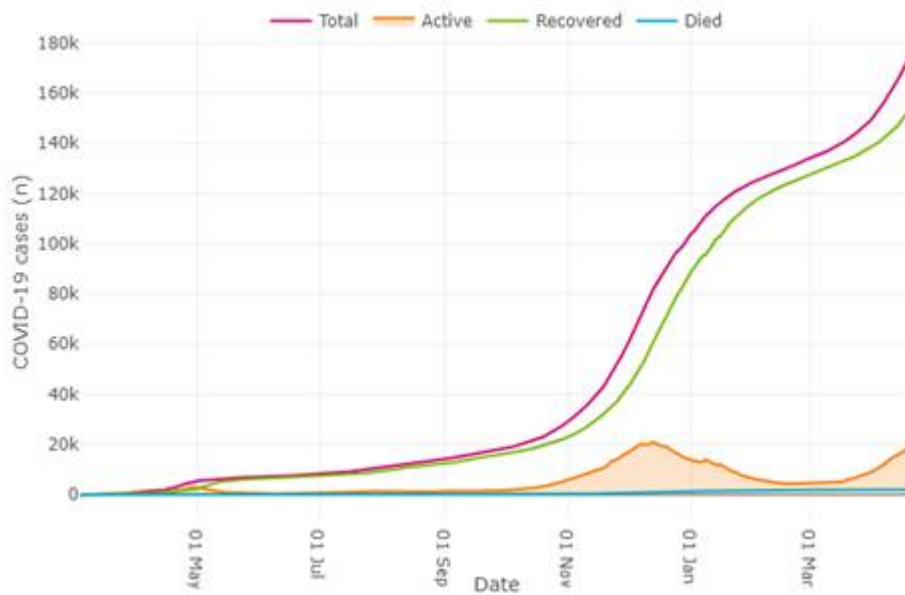
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This past week the number of new and active COVID-19 cases continued to increase in all five zones, and our provincewide ICU numbers rose by almost a third. Meanwhile, the province's immunization rollout expanded to make more Albertans eligible to receive a vaccine, helping us set a new single-day record for immunizations (see COVID-19 Immunization Update for details).

As of April 21, there were 19,182 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, 2,959 more than the previous week, an 18.2 per cent increase. As you can see in the table below, all AHS zones reported increases in their active case counts this week, with the Calgary Zone reporting the most active cases in the province for the 15th consecutive week.

	Active Cases (as of April 21)	Active Cases (as of April 14)	Per cent Change
<b>Calgary</b>	8,380	7,329	+14.3%
<b>Edmonton</b>	5,102	4,201	+21.4%
<b>North</b>	2,708	2,174	+24.6%
<b>South</b>	970	930	+4.3%
<b>Central</b>	1,994	1,515	+31.6%
<b>Unknown</b>	28	74	-62.2%

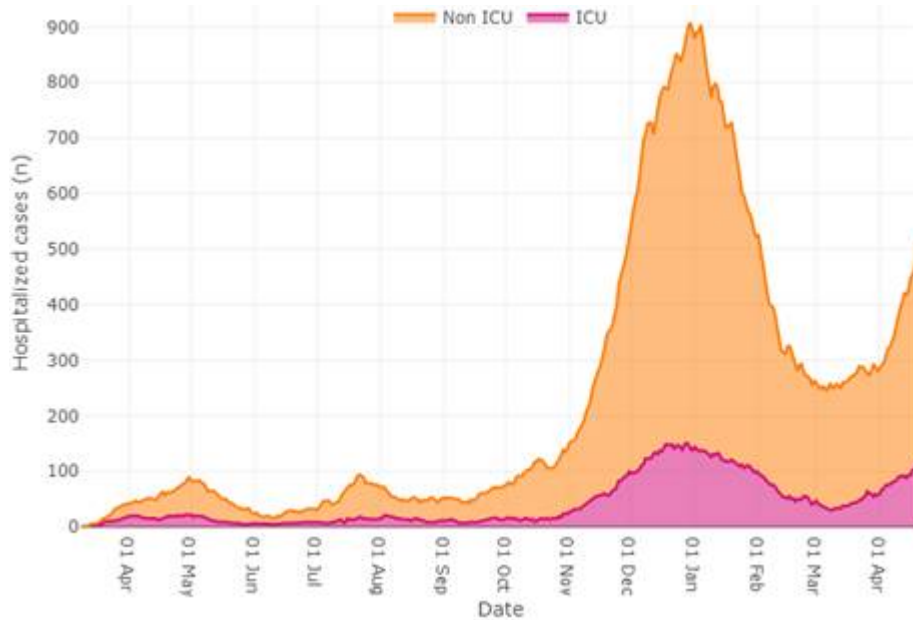
There was a daily average of 1,577 new cases in the province for the seven-day period ending April 21, compared to 1,324 the previous week, a 19 per cent increase. All AHS zones reported week-to-week increases in average new cases, with Calgary Zone reporting the largest number of new cases with 4,789, compared to 4,058 the previous week, an 18 per cent increase.



Once again this week, roughly seven out of every 10 new cases involved Albertans between the ages of 10 and 49.

### Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

The number of Albertans being treated in our hospitals and ICUs continues to spike, with a 23.9 per cent increase in total hospitalizations.



There were 116 individuals in intensive care units (ICUs) on April 21 compared to 88 on April 14, a 31.8 per cent increase. A total of 402 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds on April 21 compared to 330 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on April 14, a 21.8 per cent increase.

The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of April 21 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
<b>Calgary</b>	203	54
<b>Edmonton</b>	179	39
<b>Central</b>	56	5
<b>North</b>	47	9
<b>South</b>	33	9

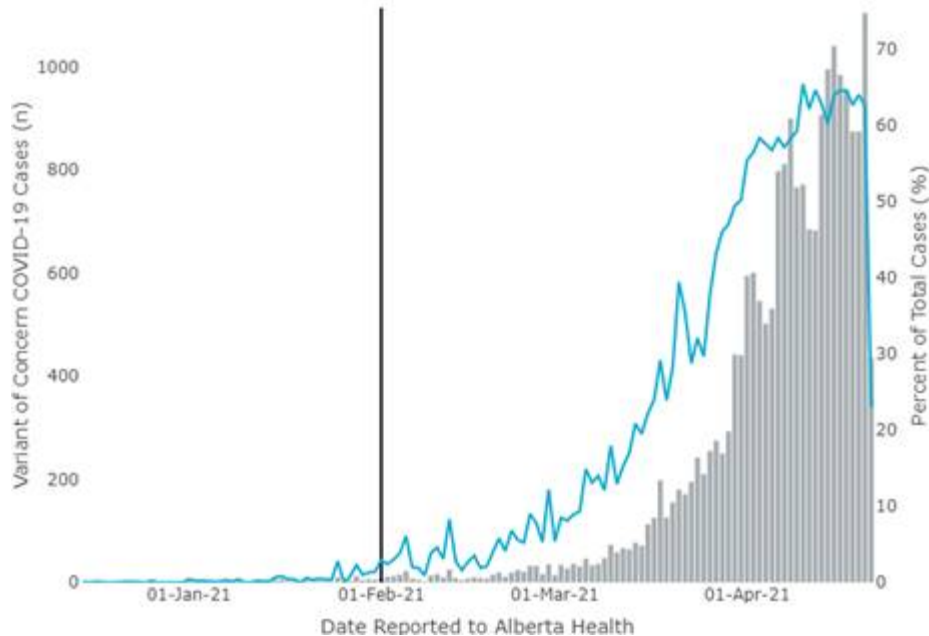
### Variants of concern

The full breakdown of the total number of reported variants of concern (VOC) by zone reported by Alberta Health on April 21 versus April 14 is presented below:

Variant	Total reported April 21	Total reported April 14	Per cent Change
<b>B.1.1.7 (U.K.)</b>	20,654	13,770	+50.0%
<b>B.1.351 (South Africa)</b>	59	29	+103.4%
<b>P.1 (Brazil)</b>	584	153	+281.7%
<b>Total</b>	21,261	13,952	+52.4%

Of the 21,261 VOC cases, 11,418 are active (59.5 per cent of total active cases), 9,782 people have recovered and 61 people have died (representing three per cent of total deaths).

The figure below shows new VOC cases by bar (grey bars) and the percentage of VOC cases identified compared to other cases of COVID-19 (blue line). Between April 13 and April 19, the percentage of VOC cases ranged from 60.2 per cent to 64.7 per cent.



#### *First case of the B.1.617 variant confirmed in Alberta*

Alberta Health announced yesterday its first case of the B.1.617 variant, which was first identified in Denmark. This variant was in a returning interprovincial traveller and no additional cases of this variant have been detected to date. This strain has been found in California and is common in India but it's not yet known whether it is a driver in the explosion of cases seen in that county.

As with all new variants, research is underway to understand what may be different in how the B.1.617 variant spreads, if it creates more serious illness and if it can break through immunity. So far, we are calling this a variant of interest as we work with colleagues across the country to monitor the latest findings and evidence from around the world.

#### **Other notable COVID-19-related information**

- As of April 21, a total of 177,087 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 7,339 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.1 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 155,851 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of April 21, 2,054 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 20 between April 15 and April 21. 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 April 15 to April 21, 110,277 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 15,754 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 9.30 per cent to 10.95 per cent. As of Apr. 21, more than four million tests have been conducted and nearly two million individuals have been tested.
- 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 provincewide R value from April 12 to April 18 was 1.09, whereas the R value the previous week was 1.12.

## Things You Need to Know

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### COVID-19 Immunization Update

#### *Another immunization milestone: 23,000+ doses in a single day*

Yesterday (April 22), 23,762 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were administered at more than 120 AHS immunization sites across Alberta — another all-time high for the number of doses of COVID-19 vaccine administered by AHS in a single day.

Thank you to all the teams for your hard work and preparation for making this possible. From our front-line immunizers to the Public Health, Logistics, IT and Communications teams – we appreciate and value all the work you have done and continue to do.

We will continue to work towards our goal to complete first doses for all Albertans who wish to have the vaccine by June, as vaccine supply allows. Every day we get closer to making this happen. Let's keep the momentum going!

#### *By the Numbers*

As of 10 a.m. today (April 23), more than 1,304,700 total doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered. More than 786,000 Albertans have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and more than 258,000 have received both Dose 1 and Dose 2.

#### *AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine eligibility expands to those born in 1981 or earlier*

On April 19, AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine eligibility expanded to those born in 1981 or earlier. The decision to reduce the age of eligibility for AstraZeneca/Covishield from 55 to 40 was based on public health recommendations looking at the benefit the vaccine offers specific age groups at the current rate of community transmission, weighed against the small risk of adverse events from this vaccine.

AstraZeneca/Covishield has been shown to reduce infection by 60 per cent to 70 per cent, and severe outcomes such as hospitalization by 80 per cent. For more information about this vaccine and how to book an appointment, visit the [AHS website](#).

*Walk-in clinics available for AstraZeneca/Covishield at locations across the province*  
Limited same-day, walk-in appointments on a first-come, first-served basis for the AstraZeneca vaccine are available for Albertans born in 1981 or before in some communities across the province. Appointments in some zones are becoming limited, and we will be moving around the remaining vaccine product, as needed, to meet the demand with available supply. Brooks, Camrose, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Red Deer are offering limited same-day, walk-in appointments at this time.

[Some pharmacies](#) across the province also continue to offer appointments and drop-in opportunities for the AstraZeneca vaccine. Hours, locations and how to book an appointment can be found [online here](#).

#### *Timing for second-dose appointments*

Once first doses are finished being offered to Albertans 16 and over, second doses will be offered as soon as supply allows.

It is anticipated this will begin in June, based on current supply estimates. If you have received your first dose, please do not call to book a second-dose appointment yet. If you currently have a second-dose appointment booked, Health Link might call to inform you that your second-dose appointment is cancelled and you will have to reschedule at a later date, closer to the 16-week window.

More information about the process, timing and eligibility for different vaccine products for second doses will be communicated once we know more about available supply and the most up-to-date evidence/expert advice on the topic.

Please continue to check the [Alberta Health](#) or [Alberta Health Services](#) website for updates and more information.

#### *Early second-dose spacing for cancer and transplant patients*

As announced yesterday (April 22), the province has reduced the period of time between first and second doses of COVID-19 vaccine for certain immunocompromised individuals — from 16 weeks to a minimum of four weeks. The interval between doses is being shortened for Albertans undergoing specific kinds of cancer treatments or who are on medications that result in a level of profound immune compromise.

Those included in this updated guideline include transplant recipients, individuals currently undergoing (or about to start) active cancer treatment with chemotherapy, targeted therapies or immunotherapy, excluding individuals receiving solely hormonal therapy, radiation therapy or surgical treatment. These guidelines also apply to transplant recipients and patients on specific

medications. For example, patients on strong immunosuppressant medications (e.g. rituximab) should be immunized at a time when they are most likely to mount an immune response.

It's recommended those who are immune compromised receive mRNA vaccines, with second doses being offered about four weeks later.

For those who have received AstraZeneca/Covishield as a first dose, second doses are recommended at 12 weeks. Clinical trials have shown that the longer spacing increases the efficacy of this vaccine; therefore, this spacing is recommended for those who are immunocompromised to ensure they have the greatest level of protection.

Anyone who meets this criteria can book a second dose by calling Health Link at 811. Second-dose bookings cannot be made through pharmacies, or through the AHS online immunization booking tool at this time. Alberta is operating on the honour system for this population. A doctor's note or other proof of eligible criteria is not required.

Clients might require specific spacing to ensure their vaccine is most effective and doesn't interfere with their treatment. We encourage everyone in this cohort to speak with their healthcare provider to help them understand if their condition is included, or to answer any questions or concerns regarding this updated guideline.

#### *One rare case of an AstraZeneca-linked blood clot confirmed in Alberta*

On April 17, a rare blood-clotting condition known as vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia (VITT) was confirmed in one individual Alberta several weeks after receiving AstraZeneca vaccine.

While every adverse reaction is unfortunate, it is important to remember these blood clots are extremely rare. This does not change the risk assessment previously communicated to Albertans.

The global frequency of VITT has been estimated at approximately one case in 100,000 to 250,000 doses of vaccine. To learn more about this rare side effect, you can visit [Health Canada's website](#).

The AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine remains a good choice for people who are at risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19, who would otherwise have to wait several months to access another vaccine. We continue to recommend that everyone book their appointment to get immunized as soon as they are able.

If you experience any of the following symptoms within four to 20 days after immunization, please seek medical attention immediately. Symptoms include:

- a severe headache that does not go away
- seizure
- difficulty moving a part of the body
- new blurry vision that does not go away

- difficulty speaking
- shortness of breath
- chest pain
- severe abdominal pain
- new severe swelling
- pain or colour change of an arm or a leg

#### *Phase 2C rollout to shelters, correctional facilities*

As part of the ongoing Phase 2C rollout, provincewide immunizations started April 19 for Alberta's vulnerable shelter staff and clients, as well as staff and those residing in correctional facilities.

AHS is now working with shelters across the province to administer the vaccine to clients, as well as offering immunization to all individuals 16 years of age and older in provincial correctional, remand and young offender centres.

Immunization rollout is being facilitated through onsite clinics using Occupational Health and Safety nurses, local primary care networks, AHS professionals and physicians.

Eligible staff at shelters and correctional facilities are also eligible to book an appointment through the [AHS online immunization booking tool](#), or by calling Health Link at 811, or through [participating pharmacies](#).

#### *Low-stimulus COVID-19 immunization clinic launched*

A low-stimulus AHS COVID-19 immunization clinic has been receiving positive feedback from clients since launching in Calgary on April 14. The low-stimulus clinic is available for people with behavioral or special needs who require a quieter, less stimulating environment.

To help limit sensory input, appointment times are booked longer than usual, which enables staff to spend more time with each client. The clinic is located near the front door, so clients do not have to walk through a building when they arrive. Appointments are offered in quiet, private rooms.

Appointments at this clinic can be made by calling Health Link at 811. Registered nurses can perform an assessment and make a referral. Community partners, such as Autism Calgary, and other immunization clinics that have not been successful in immunizing this clientele can also send referrals to the clinic.

We would like to thank all who are able to help make this clinic happen, helping to ensure all eligible Albertans are able to be immunized.

#### *Choosing your vaccine*

Getting immunized is the best way to protect your health and the health of those around you.



With three vaccines being offered at various sites around the province, some people have asked if this means they can choose their vaccine. It is important to know that all three vaccines are safe and effective at preventing severe illness.

Albertans who are eligible only for AstraZeneca/Covishield can choose to take this vaccine now or wait for an mRNA vaccine. This wait is estimated to be approximately three to four weeks for those 50 to 64, and four to six weeks for those 40 to 49.

Waiting for a specific vaccine product leaves you without the protection of a first dose, possibly for several weeks. All vaccines approved for use in Canada are effective at reducing the risk of COVID-19 infection and even more so the risks of serious outcomes that come with it.

Those who are eligible are encouraged to take the first vaccine they are able to get.

### **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 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 April 21:

- 74,917 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,862 (or 6.5 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 2,693 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 491 (or 18.2 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,036 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 5,218 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 219 (or 4.2 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 135 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 18 (or 13.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 84 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](#).

### **New Guide Created to Classify, Report Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Cases**

A [decision guide](#) — titled *Including Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Cases in Acute Care Outbreak Case Counts* — has been developed to help teams classify and report healthcare worker cases attributed to AHS acute care outbreaks in a consistent way.

When a healthcare worker tests positive, Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and Public Health (PH) work together to determine whether exposure occurred in the workplace or community. As of April 22, healthcare worker COVID-19 cases under investigation, or where the source of infection is inconclusive or indeterminate, will be counted as part of an acute care outbreak case count. If the investigation determines the case is not linked to the outbreak, the case will be removed from the count.

Classifying cases this way will help ensure consistency in reporting to Alberta Health, which requires healthcare worker cases associated with outbreaks to be reported in the same manner as other workplace outbreaks for consistency and transparency. This aligns us with Alberta Health's reporting requirements.

See the [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention and Management Task Force Insite page](#) for more information.

### **Paid Leave for COVID-19 Immunization Appointments Introduced**

On April 21, the Government of Alberta introduced [job-protected paid leave](#) to allow Albertans to access their COVID-19 vaccine. This new legislation means all AHS employees — whether full-time, part-time or casual — can access up to three consecutive hours of paid leave from work to get each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. (This leave applies only to appointments that occur during a shift and not those that occur off work time.)

AHS strongly urges eligible healthcare workers to get immunized against COVID-19 as soon as possible. Employees and managers should work together when scheduling COVID-19 vaccination leaves. Employees are required to give their leader as much notice as possible before taking their leave.

Time coding instructions for immunization appointments are being updated, and will be provided to managers, timekeepers and time approvers soon.

### **Milestone — One Million COVID-19 Tests at Calgary's South Health Campus**

Congratulations to Dr. Luiz Lisboa, Dr. Deirdre Church, Dr. Thomas Griener, William Martin, and the rest of the South Health Campus team for completing one million COVID-19 tests in less than a year. South Health Campus is now considered the backbone of COVID-19 testing for the assessment centres in the Calgary region.

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message: Celebrating National Volunteer Week**

As we come to the end of [National Volunteer Week](#) (April 18-24), AHS is proud to celebrate all the volunteers who support healthcare in Alberta, including our [site and program volunteers](#); [foundation](#), auxiliary and "Friends of" volunteers; [advisory councils](#); [patient and family advisors](#); and many more.

More than ever, we are grateful to have so many dedicated volunteers who are willing to share their time and talents with our patients and staff. Thank you for the amazing work you do across the province.

Joining our guest host, Dr. Kathryn Todd, to talk about their experiences as AHS volunteers are:

- Duncan Thomas, volunteer, Renal Dialysis Program, Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre.
- Cheryl Pigula, wayfinder volunteer, Medicine Hat Regional Hospital.
- Jan Ellis, volunteer, No One Dies Alone Program, Calgary Zone.

In [this vlog](#), Duncan, Cheryl and Jan talk about the importance of volunteering, their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and how their roles have changed.

Staff and physicians are encouraged to visit [Sharing the Love](#) and [ThanksforCaring.ca](#) to share their appreciation for all of the amazing volunteers who support our organization.



### **Eat, Drink and Be Safe**

Earlier this month, the Government of Alberta implemented stronger public health measures, which include the restriction of indoor dining. While AHS acute care facilities and healthcare facilities are exempt from this measure, the exemption is meant to accommodate the exceptional circumstance of ill patients, their approved visitors, AHS staff and volunteers. The general public is not permitted to dine indoors in our facilities.

When eating indoors, AHS staff are reminded to consume meals in designated break rooms or cafeterias, and please remember:

- Do not share food or drinks with others.
- Maintain a two-metre distance from one another, including in break rooms and cafeterias.
- Individuals sitting together must be from the same household or the two close contacts for a person living alone.

Best practices for eating and drinking at work can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

### **COVID-19 Fact or Fiction: Myth-Busting Tool**

Have you heard a comment about COVID-19 that you want to fact check? AHS has launched a new myth-busting tool on [Together4Health](#) to dispel myths you may be hearing about COVID-19.

Post your comment under the COVID-19 Fact or Fiction tab and an AHS expert will provide accurate, up-to-date information to validate or debunk your post as fact or fiction.

### **Connect Care Named Recipient of Quality Team Award**

Congratulations to our Connect Care team for Wave 1, which was named recipient of the 3M Health Care Quality Team Award (Across a Health System) as part of the 2021 Canadian College of Health Leaders' National Awards Program. Wave 3 of Connect Care launched earlier this month at select sites in the North Zone, with future waves scheduled later this year and into 2022 and 2023. Waves 1 and 2 launched in Edmonton Zone in November 2019 and October 2020, respectively.

The 3M Health Care Quality Team Awards recognizes innovation, quality, patient and family engagement, and teamwork. This award will be presented at the college's virtual Honouring Health Leadership event in June.

### **AHS Recognizes Earth Day**

In recognition of Earth Day, which was yesterday (April 22), AHS' Office of Sustainability would like to remind AHS staff it's never too late to do their part to help the environment at home or at work.

The Office of Sustainability is sharing a [checklist](#) of what everyone can do to reduce their carbon footprint.

The Office of Sustainability will continue some of the great work many passionate AHS staff are already championing at sites across the province, including recycling, waste management projects, procurement practices (including locally sourced foods), and water and energy reduction projects, such as the installation of LED lighting.

We also encourage staff to have a look at AHS' recently updated [Environmental Sustainability Policy on Insite](#).

Please visit the [Office of Sustainability Insite page](#) for more information on initiatives AHS has undertaken to further reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, our environmental footprint and costs.

### **Drum Circle Used to Aid Recovery from COVID-19**

Indigenous medicines and ceremony are playing an important role in the recovery of a Nordegg-area man at Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre.

Elmer Rattlesnake, 61, has been dealing with the effects of COVID-19 since February. For most of that time, he's been on a ventilator in the intensive care unit, with his wife and son at his side.

On two occasions, Elmer's friends and family have gathered for a drum circle outside his hospital room window to honour the well-known teacher and powwow master of ceremonies. For the first, he was unresponsive; for the second, he was awake and tapping his foot to the music. Today, Elmer is talking, drinking water and taking tentative steps.

"The power of the drum, the singing and the prayers all work together," says his son, Dylan Rattlesnake.

The Rattlesnakes are one of many Indigenous families that hospital staff have learned from this year. Smudges are often performed bedside, and healing teas are incorporated into care plans.



### **New Family-Focused NICU Opens at Stollery**

The team at the David Schiff neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at the Stollery Children's Hospital marked a new beginning Wednesday, with the opening of their new unit.

The new NICU features 18 beds in single or double patient rooms, providing a quiet setting for infants. The quiet rooms allow for better sleep, which promotes better healing, better brain health and better long-term outcomes. The individual rooms also promote infection prevention and control. The biggest advantage, though, is more privacy and space for patients and family members who stay overnight, sometimes for weeks at a time, as their newborns recover from surgery.

Families were involved in every step of the planning and design of the new unit, helping to build an intensive care space that will improve the healthcare journey for patients and families.

Check out the [video](#) below to see the new space and what it means for families.



## Be Well - Be Kind

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### Let's Talk Mental Health

Join the [Our People Strategy Webinar: Let's Talk Mental Health](#) on April 29, from 11 a.m. to noon. Sean Chilton, VP People, Health Professions and Information Technology, and his guests will share:

- Powerful personal experiences with mental health.
- The impact of COVID-19 on our mental health.
- How to support one another.
- What we're doing to support mental health and psychological safety at AHS.

Learn more and [register now](#).

### April 28 is National Day of Mourning

On April 28, AHS will recognize [National Day of Mourning](#) — a day to remember our colleagues who have been injured, disabled or lost their lives as a result of work-related incidents. Flags at our facilities will fly at half-mast in their honour that day.

During these challenging times, safety — one of our core values — continues to be a top priority for us all. This day reminds us to speak up, take action and work together to prevent injury, illness and death in the workplace.

We have many [resources](#) in place to help you continue to make safe, informed decisions, including [specific resources](#) regarding COVID -19. If you have been personally impacted by a workplace fatality or serious injury or illness, or are experiencing [stress, anxiety or depression](#) or [grief and loss](#) during these challenging times, we encourage you to seek support from our [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#). It is a free, flexible and confidential service, available 24/7.

See [Insite](#) for more information and awareness tools to prevent workplace injuries. Thank you for your ongoing commitment and support in protecting yourself, your colleagues and our patients.

### **Sharing the Love — With Our Volunteers**

*This National Volunteer Week, we thank the hundreds of Albertans who volunteer their time, talent and resources in support of our philanthropic partners. Alberta Health Services is fortunate to work alongside over 50 auxiliaries and 69 health foundations who raise over \$275 million annually in support of healthcare in Alberta. A significant portion of this funding is only possible because of the committed volunteers who serve on boards, take part in campaigns, help with events and contribute in countless other ways. Their support has touched all areas of healthcare in our communities and across the province. Most recently, their contributions have made a significant impact on our COVID-19 response by funding mental health programs, laboratory equipment, research and much more. Despite facing many challenges over the past year, our philanthropic partners and their donors continue to show immense generosity toward our healthcare system. We greatly admire their ongoing commitment toward improving healthcare for Albertans, and appreciate all they have done and continue to do for Alberta Health Services.*

— AHS Executive Leadership Team

*This National Volunteer Week, Alberta Health Services expresses its heartfelt gratitude to our philanthropic partners. In particular, we would like to thank the many foundations, auxiliaries and fundraising groups who support our rural sites throughout Alberta. These organizations and their volunteers are invaluable members of our healthcare team, and play an important role in the care we provide to patients. Their support has funded new medical equipment, department renovations, revitalized outdoor spaces, comfort items and much more. Their contributions have touched all areas of healthcare, and have had a meaningful impact our patients and their families. We are proud to work alongside these committed volunteers, and are grateful for all they do to support healthcare in their communities and across the province.*

— AHS Board Chair David Weyant

### **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 coming in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share a recent message of gratitude with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

It was my pleasure to witness the extraordinary organizational efforts made by each one of you to make sure that the immunization process (at Edmonton Expo Centre) runs optimally and smoothly for everyone. The timely-efficient and the highly professional team members of AHS at that site made it possible to achieve the highest standards of healthcare practices and safety. Thanks to all of you; it was a pleasure getting involved in your dynamic healthcare professional team.

— Andrew

### **Wrapping Up — Immunizations Inspire Hope**

It was another week of concern over rising COVID-19 numbers but also excitement as more and more Albertans are getting immunized. We'd like to close this week's message with a big thank you to everyone involved in booking and immunizing Albertans, including the large, newly eligible group: those born in 1981 or earlier. Our spirits are boosted every time we see photos on social media of smiling Albertans showing off Band-Aids on their arms. The vaccine rollout is now well underway and watching the number of immunized Albertans rise gives us hope we can put this pandemic behind us in the months ahead. Of course, we have much work to do and many severely ill people in our hospitals and ICUs. So, we'd also like to thank our front-line healthcare workers who are caring for patients during this third wave, everyone who supports the front lines, as well as all of you who are doing your part to follow public health measures and encouraging others to do the same. Let's continue to hold onto hope, because there is reason for hope, and let's do everything we can to keep ourselves and others safe.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

