



Message from
Dr. Verna Yiu &
Dr. Laura McDougall

*AHS Update: COVID-19 cases continue to decrease,
submit immunization status by Oct. 16*

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

Today's Update

- **Submit Proof of COVID-19 Immunization Today**
- **Supports When You Need Them**
- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **App to Scan COVID-19 Vaccine QR Codes Now Available**
- **Influenza Immunization Appointments Available starting Monday**
- **Newfoundland & Labrador Teams at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre**
- **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Spotlight on Respiratory Therapists**
- **Global Handwashing Day**
- **Compensation Disclosure Threshold Set for 2021**
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- **Gratitude from Albertans**
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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.



Deadline: You Must Submit Your COVID-19 Immunization Status by **October 16**

Reminder: Submit your Proof of Immunization for COVID-19 Today

If you haven't submitted your proof of immunization or received your final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, now is the time to do so. Employees are **reminded they have until Oct. 16** 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 Oct. 31, to comply with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#).

If you are fully immunized, you can submit by clicking on the [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#). You will need your **Alberta Health Care Number** (9 digits), **Employee ID Number** (8 digits) and **date of immunization**, to submit.

Submit proof of
immunization now

If you have challenges accessing or submitting the online form, you may also use these [instructions](#) to submit your proof of immunization:

1. Obtain a copy of your immunization from [MyHealth Records](#)
2. Use the [email template](#) and fill out the fields before you submit
3. Use your AHS email when submitting to ensure the secure transmission of your records

If you previously submitted a record and your manager has informed you that your status is still showing as unconfirmed, resubmit your [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#). If you have recently resubmitted and still are not showing as confirmed, please be patient, as we are working hard to process and validate records as quickly as possible. You can also contact Workplace Health and Safety at COVID19Immunization@ahs.ca for help.

We must ensure the safety of our people, patients and communities. Healthcare workers have an [ethical and professional](#) responsibility to protect others.

Immunization helps us meet this standard.

Except where a workplace accommodation is approved, those employees who are not fully immunized by Oct. 31 will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence. Please see our [staff FAQ](#) for more information. Additional supports and resources can be found on [Insite](#).

Supports When You Need Them

Crisis Management Support

Everyone should get the support they need after experiencing an unsettling workplace event or critical incident at work. As part of the [Employee Family and Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) psychological supports, [Crisis Management Services](#) (CMS) is designed to respond to each unique incident, and offer assessment, emotional first aid and self-care strategies. The services includes:

- Providing a safe environment for those most affected, to speak about their experience regarding the specific event.
- Acknowledging, validating, and normalizing physical and emotional reactions.
- Receiving helpful information from a professional about how to cope with stress reactions associated with a critical incident.
- Helping employees focus on their personal strengths and resourcefulness to support adaptive coping and a healthy recovery.

CMS experts will provide support on-site, over the phone, or by video. The optimal timing for on-site/virtual deployment is one to three days, post-incident. If teams are experiencing acute stress, same day deployment is available, as needed. Managers can schedule CMS year-round, 24 hours a day, seven days a week by contacting the EFAP intake line at 1-877-273-3134. The Crisis Management Team will work with the manager to discuss the needs of the team, and the best time and location for the CMS.

For immediate, personal support, call the EFAP intake line anytime (1-877-273-3134).

For physicians, please contact the [AMA Physician and Family Support Program](#), which offers a confidential 24/7 support line at 1-877-SOS-4MDS for options and support.

There are many ways we can support you, no matter your situation – see the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports. Questions? Contact wellness@ahs.ca.

COVID-19 Status

ICU Capacity Update

AHS continues to do all it can to ensure we have enough ICU capacity to meet patient demand, including opening additional spaces and redeploying staff.

As of 2:15 p.m. today (Oct. 15), we have 376 ICU beds open in Alberta, including 203 additional spaces (a 117 per cent increase over our baseline of 173).

There are currently 287 patients in ICU, the vast majority of whom are COVID-19 positive. While the number of patients in ICU fluctuates constantly, the number of patients in ICU has decreased by 1.3 per cent over the past seven days.

Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 76 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 163 per cent.

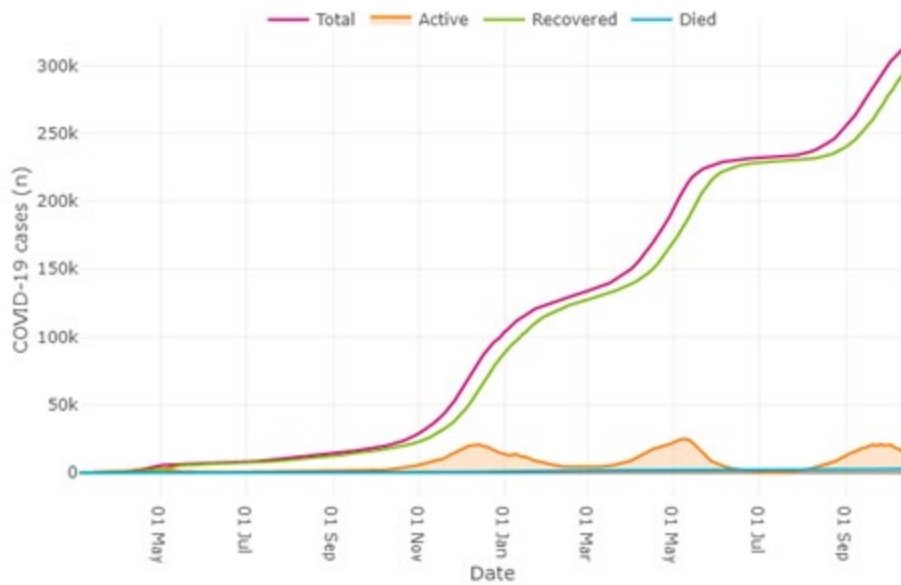
- In Calgary Zone, we currently have 138 ICU beds, including 72 additional spaces. Calgary Zone ICU is operating at 78 per cent of current capacity.
- In Edmonton Zone, we currently have 159 ICU beds, including 87 additional spaces. Edmonton Zone is operating at 77 per cent of current capacity.
- In Central Zone, we currently have 24 ICU beds, including 12 additional spaces. Central Zone ICU is operating at 54 per cent of current capacity.
- In South Zone, we currently have 36 ICU beds, including 19 additional ICU spaces. South Zone ICU is currently operating at 72 per cent capacity.
- In North Zone, we have 19 ICU spaces (split between Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray), including 13 additional ICU spaces. North Zone is currently operating at 95 per cent capacity.

As of October 13, 2,930 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 116 deaths over the past week. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who are grieving today.

New and Active Cases

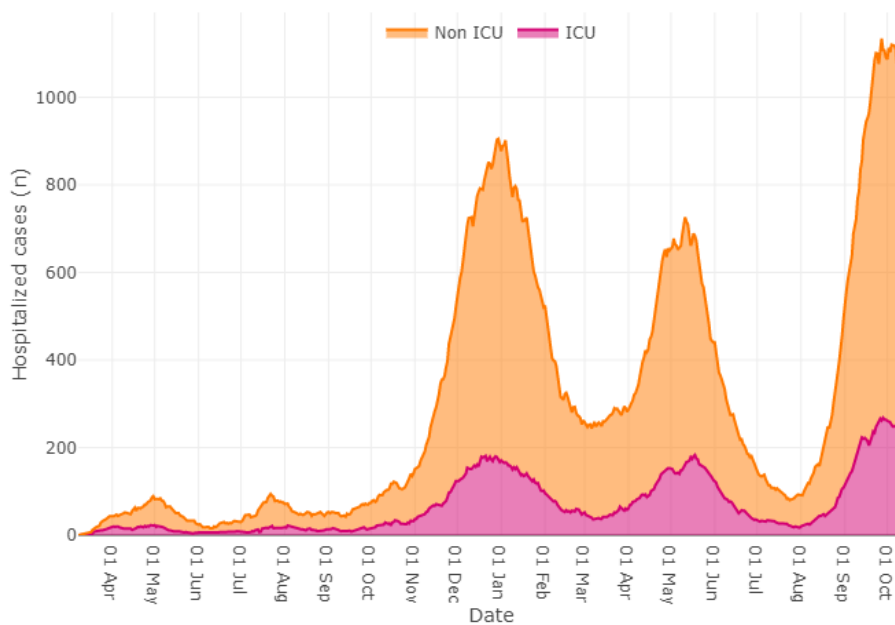
There are currently 12,978 active cases of COVID-19 in Alberta, a 27.3 per cent decrease, compared to Oct. 8 when there were 17,839 active cases.

For the seven-day period ending Oct. 6, there was an average of 890 new daily cases of COVID-19, compared to 1,275 for the previous week (Sept 30 – Oct 6), a 29.9 per cent decrease. This week, all zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from a 23.6 per cent decrease in Edmonton Zone to a 35.8 per cent decrease in Central Zone. Over the past week, Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 1,584 (an average of 226 cases per day), compared to 2,237 new cases the previous week (an average of 320 cases per day).



Hospitalizations

A total of 785 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19 on Oct. 13, compared to 870 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on Oct. 6, a 9.8 per cent decrease.

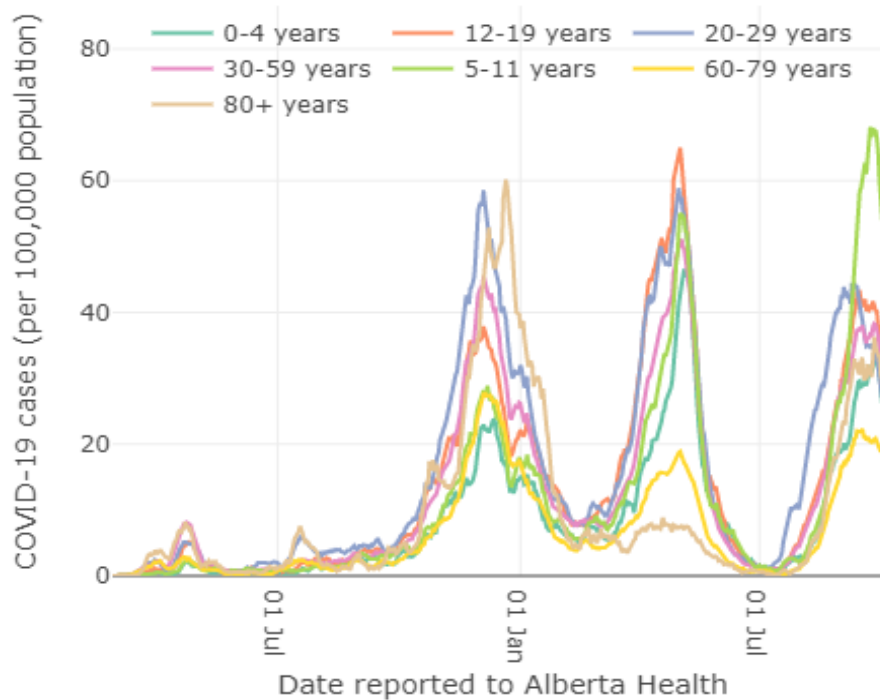


Cases by Age Group

As of Oct.10, 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 34.86 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans ages 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 21 cases per 100,000 people.

All age groups reported a decreased rate of COVID-19 cases compared to the

previous report. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are in the figure below.



Variants of Concern

The lab is still utilizing targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From Oct. 5 to Oct. 11, the average percent of positive samples that were strain-typed was 52 per cent. Of those strain-typed, the rolling average was 99.8 per cent Delta variant. The remaining 0.2 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 Oct. 13, a total of 313,201 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 13,705 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.4 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 296,848 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- From Oct. 7 to Oct. 13, 76,808 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 10,973 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 7.47 per cent to 9.14 per cent. As of Oct. 13, a total of 5,704,121 tests have been conducted and 2,476,074 individuals have ever 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 R value is updated every two weeks. From Sept. 27 to Oct. 3, the provincewide R value was 0.92 and the previously reported value was 1.04. There was no update for this week.
- [Public reporting](#) of COVID-19 cases in schools continues, which includes the

name of each school with at least two COVID-19 cases.

Things You Need to Know

App to Scan COVID-19 Vaccine QR Codes Now Available

On Oct. 12, the [Government of Alberta launched the free AB Covid Records Verifier app](#) for businesses and organizations to use to confirm their patrons' immunization status. The app is available for download on Apple and Android devices.

Albertans can get their enhanced vaccine record with a QR code online at alberta.ca/CovidRecords, without creating an account. To get the QR code, they need to enter their personal health number, date of birth, and month and year they received one of their COVID-19 vaccine doses.

Albertans can also request a printed proof of immunization with a QR code from a local registry agent office or by calling 811. Other forms of proof of immunization will continue to be accepted until Nov. 15, including paper records from vaccine providers or a screenshot, or a printed record from alberta.ca/CovidRecords or [MyHealthRecords](#).

Reminder: Additional COVID-19 vaccine doses available for eligible populations

Last week, eligibility for third doses of the COVID-19 vaccine was expanded to include Albertans age 75 and older (born in 1946 or before), and First Nations, Inuit and Métis people age 65 and older (born in 1956 or before). Third doses can be administered starting six months after the second dose.

Third doses continue to be available for seniors living in congregate care, for immunocompromised individuals 12 years of age and older with specific conditions, and for travellers going to jurisdictions where Covishield/AstraZeneca or mixed doses are not recognized.

Appointments can be booked [online](#) at AHS clinics, participating pharmacies and physician clinics, or by calling Health Link at 811. COVID-19 vaccines are also available by walk-in at [participating clinics](#) and pharmacies. Individuals aged 65 and older who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on reserve.

Those deemed ineligible due to age, or if six months have not yet passed since receiving their second dose, can re-book when eligible. For more information, go to alberta.ca/vaccine.

Influenza Immunization Appointments Available starting Monday

Alberta's public influenza immunization campaign begins Monday, October 18, offering influenza vaccine, free of charge, to all Albertans six months of age and

older.

GET FULLY PROTECTED.
You need both **INFLUENZA** and **COVID-19 VACCINES.**
Don't have your COVID-19 vaccine?
It's safe to get it together with your influenza vaccine.

ahs.ca/vaccine | call 811

Alberta Government | Alberta Health Services

More than 19 months into the pandemic response, we need to keep working together to protect each other, our loved ones and our communities by rolling up our sleeves again this year to get immunized against influenza. By keeping the number of influenza cases and outbreaks low, we can help protect at-risk Albertans and reduce the pressure on our healthcare system.

Like last year, AHS is working with community pharmacists and physicians to offer influenza immunization to all Albertans.

AHS public health clinics are offering immunization to those under five years of age and their immediate families or household members. Appointments are required at AHS clinics. Albertans five years of age and older can get immunized at participating pharmacies and doctor's offices.

Online booking for appointments at AHS clinics and participating pharmacies is available through the province's centralized vaccine booking tool at bookvaccine.alberta.ca. If appointments are not available online in your area, we encourage Albertans to contact their local pharmacy or doctor's office directly.

Appointments start October 18.

Individuals who do not have a provincial health care number, who live in a community where there are no other immunizing healthcare providers aside from AHS, or who need help booking one or multiple appointments for children and family members, can call Health Link at 811 to book an appointment.

This year, Albertans eligible for their COVID-19 vaccine, will be able to get it at the same time as their influenza vaccine at participating pharmacies, doctor's offices and AHS clinics.

For more information on immunization options and booking, for both COVID-19 and

influenza, go to ahs.ca/vaccine. Staff, physicians and volunteers can also choose to be immunized for influenza through a site champion at their facility, a roving cart at their site, or a Workplace Health and Safety drop-in clinic. See [Insite](#) for more on the staff immunization campaign and visit ahs.ca/influenza for more information on influenza.

Influenza is serious and immunization works. [Book your flu shot today.](#)

Newfoundland and Labrador Teams Support Northern Lights Regional Health Centre

We are extremely grateful for the assistance of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, which has provided seven healthcare workers to the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre in Fort McMurray, to help alleviate the increased pressure on our health system from COVID-19.

The team of four RNs, two physicians and a nurse practitioner arrived in Fort McMurray over the Thanksgiving weekend. They participated in on-site training and orientation on Oct. 10 and began working on-site on Oct. 11. During their time in Fort McMurray, the team will be supporting the hospital's ICU and the COVID unit.

The arrival of these healthcare workers has also enabled the hospital to increase their ICU capacity from eight ICU beds and one overflow bed, to 10 ICU beds and one overflow bed.

We are so appreciative for the added support of the Newfoundland and Labrador healthcare teams and the tireless efforts our AHS frontline teams as they provide care to those who need it.



The seven healthcare workers from Newfoundland and Labrador healthcare

participated in orientation training over the Thanksgiving weekend at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre, prior to the start of their shifts in the facility's ICU and COVID-19 unit.



Newfoundland and Labrador healthcare workers Megan Bradbury, left, and Jennifer Richard, right, work alongside Dr. Surinder Khinda at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre on Oct. 13.

Verna's Weekly Video Message: Spotlight on Respiratory Therapists

We often hear about the role our doctors and nurses play in caring for COVID-19 patients. One group you might not hear as much about, but is just as vital, is our team of more than 1,400 skilled respiratory therapists from across the province.

Our respiratory therapists work in operating rooms as anesthesia assistants; perform pulmonary function testing; and work in home care, acute care, health promotion, and diagnostic imaging. They are critical parts of the care team, monitoring and caring for patients with breathing problems, which often goes hand-in-hand with a COVID-19 diagnosis.

They help manage airways in patients, maintain life support equipment, such as ventilators, insert and maintain artificial airways, teach patients how to use breathing devices, and so much more.

Joining me (Verna) [to tell us more about their role](#) are:

- Roberta Dubois, Practice Director, Provincial Respiratory Therapy, Health Professions Strategy & Practice
- Nancy Van Der Velden, Registered Respiratory Therapist, Peter Lougheed Hospital
- Karrie Whalen, Interim Professional Practice Lead and Registered Respiratory Therapist at the University of Alberta Hospital and Royal Alexandra Hospital



It's Global Handwashing Day

Hand hygiene has been a daily topic of conversation everywhere since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Global Handwashing Day (today, Oct. 15) and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) week (Oct. 18-22), we want to say thank you for taking the time to adhere to IPC best practices and for regularly cleaning your hands. It's making a difference: [find out how, here](#).

The Provincial PPE safety coaching program is still available for information and support. Visit ahs.ca/ppesafetycoach.

Compensation Disclosure Threshold Set for 2021

The 2021 compensation-disclosure threshold for public-sector employees under the [Public Sector Compensation Act](#) will be \$136,805. The 2021 public disclosure will be made on or before June 30, 2022.

The deadline to [apply](#) to the Government of Alberta for an exemption from public disclosure is Nov. 1, 2021. Note: exemptions are only granted when there is a risk to personal safety.

Questions? Visit the Government of Alberta's [website](#) or see [Insite](#).

AHS to Host Virtual Take Our Kids to Work Day

Take Our Kids to Work Day is an annual program created by [Learning Partnership](#), which traditionally gives Grade 9 students a one-day opportunity to observe their parent or an approved AHS employee host in the workplace.

This year, AHS will be hosting a virtual career exploration event on Wednesday, Nov.

3, to keep students, patients and staff safe. The event will feature speakers from across AHS to help students understand the range of professions needed to deliver healthcare to Albertans.

The online event will also have the added benefit of bringing students and staff together provincially, offering students an opportunity to hear different perspectives on healthcare from other parts of the province.

The event will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a break for lunch. Students can [register online](#) by Nov. 2. More information can be found on [Insite](#).

Be Well - Be Kind

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 some recent messages of gratitude with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

In early March of this year, my son had a lung injury. From the EMS crew, his family doctor and staff on call at our local hospital, the STARS crew, the medical staff and doctors in the ICU unit at the U of A Hospital, the care he received was exceptional and helped save his life. During his month-long stay there, everyone went above and beyond to make the most difficult time in our lives easier and keep him comfortable and on the road to recovery. Words cannot express how grateful we are to everyone. We are truly blessed to have such amazing healthcare workers.

— Tammy

I'm so grateful for the work you have done and are continuing to do. Thanks for saving two people I care about who could have died from the COVID-19 virus. Both are wonderful women who will bless many. Thanks again for all you do!

— Carol

Thank you so much for all you've done through this pandemic. It has been long and you haven't been appreciated enough.

— Shawna Ohlmann Chan

Wrapping Up



Bragg Creek, Alberta
dankimphotos/Instagram

This week has given us renewed hope and we truly needed that. The numbers of Albertans needing intensive care has fallen by a small amount over the past week, and while it's far too early to suggest this is a trend, even reducing the burden slightly, with some locations seeing fewer critically ill patients, is positive. We'd love to say that we're coming to the end of this horrible fourth wave, but frankly, we just don't know yet. At the very least, we'll take this as a good sign and we'll bask in that, like we did the glowing displays on the horizon provided by the northern lights this week, which so gloriously shone over Alberta.

We know that these improving numbers do not mean that your workload is suddenly back to normal. Your days continue to be extraordinary, and your efforts remain beyond what is usually expected of you. However, this small improvement serves as encouragement to us all to keep hanging in there. It's reassurance that we've made some progress. We need all of you to keep providing the unconditional care you have been unceasing in delivering to Albertans, and, we need all of you to be fully protected. In addition to the COVID-19 vaccine, please make sure you have the influenza vaccine, so we don't add this serious seasonal illness to the current COVID-19 pressures on our system. Get immunized starting next week, to keep yourself, each other, our families and our patients, safe.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health