Update on COVID-19 related items

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers

There are a few COVID-19 related updates that may be of interest to you and your teams.

COVID-19 Access Restrictions Rescinded

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, access restrictions have been in place to limit the number of visitors and designated family/support persons (DFSPs) permitted in healthcare facilities. While these limits have been necessary to reduce the risk of transmission, we understand how challenging they have been for patients, their families and the staff who must enforce them.

The COVID-19 access directive and guidance have now been rescinded at all AHS acute care, ambulatory care, urgent care and emergency care sites.

With this change, sites have transitioned to the AHS Provincial Family Presence Policy Suite, which will provide ongoing direction around accommodating DFSPs and visitors. AHS Continuing Care sites transitioned to the Family Presence Policy Suite in August 2021.

What this means for sites

While the rescinding of COVID-19 access restrictions means that sites are no longer required to impose measures such as limiting the number of DFSPs or visitors per patient, or restricting visitor access, sites are able to develop an implementation approach based on their own circumstances (for example, re-introducing certain limits in the event of an outbreak).

With this in mind, it is recommended that DFSPs and visitors confirm with the site or care team if limits are in place before they travel to site.

These changes will be communicated to the public today, along with updates to [AHS' visitation webpage](#) (the primary source of information for families and visitors).

You can learn more about this change by reviewing the [Staff and Physician FAQ](#) and the [transition webpage](#).

What requirements will remain in place

DFSPs and visitors must continue to follow all precautions as directed by AHS staff. These include continuous masking, site screening, physical distancing (which may limit how many people can be in an area at one time), and hand hygiene, which will remain in place until otherwise announced.

Questions?

For general questions regarding the transition, please contact ECC@ahs.ca. If you have questions about supporting family presence, please contact the provincial Engagement & Patient Experience team at patient.engagement@ahs.ca.

Additional booster doses now available

As announced by Alberta Health, starting today July 20, Albertans 18 years of age and older can book appointments for a second booster dose of mRNA vaccine five months or more after receiving their first booster dose. It is recommended to wait at least three months after a COVID-19 infection before getting a booster dose.

This dose is of most benefit to those at high risk of severe outcomes including:

- Residents of seniors congregate living facilities regardless of age
  - Applicable congregate settings include all private and public long-term care facilities, licensed supportive living facilities and seniors' lodges including First Nations elder care lodges.
- Individuals 50 years of age and older Note: Second booster doses will correspond to a fourth dose for immunocompetent individuals who received a two-dose primary series, but will correspond to a fifth dose for immunocompromised individuals who received a three-dose primary series.

Appointments for second booster doses can be booked by eligible individuals through the [Alberta vaccine booking system](#). Albertans can also call Health Link at 811. Select pharmacies will also be accepting walk-in appointments.

Currently, everyone 12 years and older are eligible for a first booster dose.

If you have questions about getting a booster dose, we encourage you to visit our website, talk to your family physician, or call Health Link at 811. We encourage all

Albertans to receive all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine they are eligible for as soon as possible.

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