

## CMO SMOH Weekly Notice for AHS Medical Staff

December 24, 2020

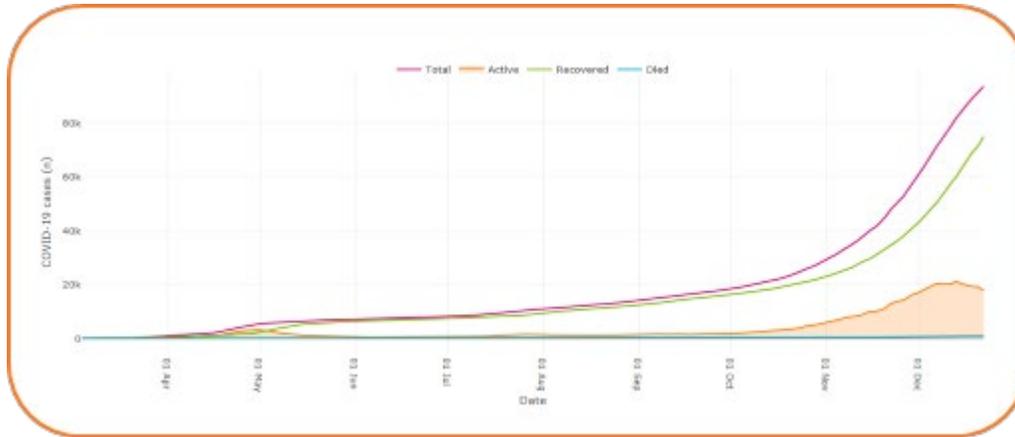
### This week:

- COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta **Update**
- COVID-19 Vaccine **Update**
- COVID-19 Temporary Lodging Program **New**
- Genetic Sequencing of Coronavirus **New**
- COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers, Influenza Updates **Paused**
- Medical Certificate of Death – **Reminder**
- Updated COVID-19 Guidance Documents:
  - [Care of the Adult Critically Ill COVID-19 Patient](#)
  - [Pre-Triage/Triage Screening Criteria for ED/UCC/EMS/Obstetrical nurses, clerks, midwives, physicians](#)
  - Continuing Care: [Initiation of CPAP/BPAP During COVID-19 Pandemic Response](#)
  - Continuing Care: [Maintaining CPAP/BPAP During COVID-19 Pandemic Response](#)
- Scientific Advisory Group latest Rapid Reviews:
  - [Criteria to Inform Changes to PPE Guidelines](#)
  - [Strategies to Increase Hospital Capacity for COVID-19](#)
- Verna's Weekly Video Message **New**
- Physician Diversity, Wellness and Leadership Development **Reminder**
- Doc of the Week **New**
- Additional Resources for Physicians

### **COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta**

For the second consecutive week, the average number of daily new cases has decreased. There was an average of 1,273 new daily cases for the six-day period ending Dec. 22\*, compared to 1,587 cases the previous week (Dec. 10 to 16), a 20 per cent decrease. There were still more than 1,000 daily new cases every day during this six-day period.

*[Note: Usually, the average number of daily new cases captures a seven-day period from Thursday of the previous week to Wednesday of the present week. However, due to the holiday season, the average daily new cases for the present update only reflects a six-day period from Thursday, Dec. 17, to Tuesday, Dec. 22.]*



The total number of active cases in the province also decreased each day over the past week, and every zone reported a drop of active cases. As of Dec. 22, there are 17,821 active cases in the province, down from 19,607 on Dec. 17.

Edmonton Zone has the most active cases at 8,427 cases. The table below shows the number of active cases in each zone for the last two weeks.

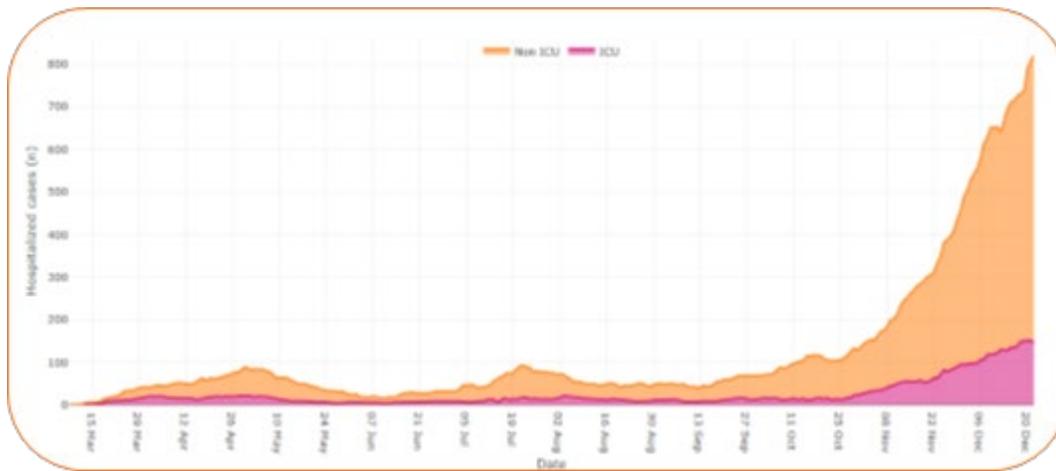
	Active Cases (week ending Dec. 22)*	Active Cases (week ending Dec. 16)	Per cent Change
Edmonton	8,427	9,525	-11.5%
Calgary	6,470	7,043	-8.1%
Central	1,391	1,462	-4.9%
North	1,092	1,214	-10.0%
South	390	541	-27.9%
Unknown	51	80	-36.3%

From Dec. 16 to Dec. 22, there were 4,681 cases among individuals ages 20 to 49 years (about half of all new cases during that time period), with 1,330 new cases reported among school-aged children (five to 19 years) and 1,760 new cases among adults ages 60 years and older.

Alberta reported 100 deaths over the past six days, bringing the total number of COVID-19-related deaths in the province to 890. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.

## Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

The number of individuals being treated for COVID-19 in Alberta hospitals continues to rise. On Dec. 22, there was a record 821 individuals being treated for COVID-19 in Alberta hospitals, compared to 710 on Dec. 15, a 15 per cent increase. On Dec. 22, there were 146 individuals in intensive care, five fewer than the record of 151 set the previous day but up from 135 on Dec. 15.



The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Dec. 22 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
Edmonton	475	83
Calgary	214	47
Central	79	10
North	39	4
South	14	2

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

- As of Dec. 22, a total of 93,781 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and a total of 3,207 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 3.4 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 75,070 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- From Dec. 17 to 22, 107,819 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 17,970 per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 6.81 per cent to 7.49 per cent. As of Dec. 22, a total of 2,690,432 tests have been conducted and 1,626,216 individuals have been tested.
- As of Dec. 23, AHS has confirmed 3,730 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. Currently, about two of five schools (41 per cent) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

## **COVID-19 Vaccine Update**

Fourteen dedicated COVID-19 immunization centres have been set across the province and are distributing vaccines as efficiently and quickly as possible. In addition to Calgary and Edmonton, immunization locations have been set up in all zones including Central Zone (Red Deer, Drumheller and Camrose); South Zone (Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Brooks and Pincher Creek); and North Zone (Grande Prairie, St. Paul, Edson and Fort McMurray).

AHS is distributing vaccine within the parameters outlined by Alberta Health. The current high level sequencing of healthcare worker vaccination is:

- Early Phase 1: Respiratory therapists, ICU workforce and healthcare workers in highest risk LTC and DSL sites
- Phase 1A: All of Phase 1, plus ED workforce and additional LTC and DSL and homecare workforce
- Phase 1B: All of Phase 1 and 1a, plus healthcare workers in medical, surgical, COVID-19 units and operating rooms
- Phase 2: Details are still being determined

Alberta Health Services will continue to directly contact all staff and physicians who are eligible to receive the vaccine in this initial phase to set up an appointment to receive the vaccine. Only those identified to receive the COVID-19 vaccine during Early Phase 1 and Phase 1A will directly receive a call. If you do not receive a call to book your appointment, please do not call Health Link, as Health Link is not responsible for determining vaccine allocation.

If you believe you are part of the high priority groups and have not been contacted, please follow-up with your medical leader by emailing [cmo@ahs.ca](mailto:cmo@ahs.ca), and include the following information:

- Subject line: Vaccine Intake
- Your first and last name
- Primary medical specialty
- A direct phone number to be reached at if we require further information
- Zone
- Site(s) where you provide healthcare services related to Early Phase 1

There is currently no ability to change appointments. This will change when the online booking tool is introduced in the New Year. Please do your best to honour your appointments to ensure that every dose of the current, limited vaccine supply is used.

AHS has established a provincewide COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force with representation from all zones, as well as a variety of groups including Indigenous Health leaders and physicians, to ensure provincial alignment with eligibility decisions, transparency and to address concerns with vaccination rollout. This committee is working to ensure all staff and physician lists for vaccine eligibility are consistent across the province as we move forward with our vaccine distribution planning.

In collaboration with the broader AHS COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force, a Physician COVID-19 working group has been assembled to help ensure AHS and community physicians from across the province can provide input to help determine the sequencing of vaccine distribution to physician groups. The group also meets to discuss questions and concerns from physician groups, and align provincial vaccine distribution guidelines.

A COVID-19 vaccination [website](#) has been developed and will be updated as information becomes available.

We appreciate the hard work and dedication of the many staff involved in COVID-19 immunization planning as we continue through our pandemic journey together. We recognize the complexity of these tasks as the situation is rapidly evolving, and we are working hard to ensure it is as smooth as possible. Please remember to be kind to one another. We are all in this together.

### **New COVID-19 Temporary Lodging Program**

AHS continues to look for innovative ways to support our staff and physicians and their safety during our COVID-19 response.

In response to ongoing staffing pressures related to COVID-19, a temporary lodging program has been developed to support staff and physicians in specific circumstances, including:

- When critical frontline staff or physicians are willing to pick up additional shifts or extra hours related to COVID-19 response efforts;
- When overtime is required for critical frontline staff or physicians, in order to support COVID-19 response efforts, and travel back and forth from the individual's residence would not be safe or would limit critical availability; and/or
- When temporary lodging will support a staff member or physician who may have other concerns related to returning to their residence after a shift.

The [COVID-19 Temporary Lodging Guidelines](#) provide further details about the program, including how to access the program, approvals, reimbursement and coding.

By providing our staff and physicians with the option to use nearby lodging, the goal is to help everyone feel supported in making the best decision for themselves and their safety. The program may also increase available hours where long commutes would not be safe or would limit critical availability.

The temporary lodging program is voluntary for those staff and physicians who qualify and wish to partake with required approval. The program is not intended to be used by staff or physicians for isolation or redeployment purposes. Provisions for redeployed staff are outlined in the applicable collective agreements and all other [AHS Travel Policy](#) provisions continue to apply.

### **Medical Certificate of Death – Reminder**

Prompt completion of the Attending Physician's Medical Certificate of Death (the "death certificate") is important in supporting appropriate care after death by facilitating movement of deceased patients to funeral providers while also providing family-centred and culturally sensitive care. AHS Medical Staff Rules support this practice by identifying a timeline of 48 hours to complete the death certificate.

In the spring of 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, changes to relevant regulations and further clarifications were shared. Please be reminded of these changes, particularly over the holiday season when acute care physician coverage may rotate, including:

- Nurse Practitioners were recognized as having a role in completing the *Certificate of Death* in accordance with the Vital Statistics Information Regulation.
- Completion of the death certificate no longer always requires attendance in person prior to the patient's death, if other criteria are met to complete the death certificate. Further detail is provided in the [Educational Briefing](#) – "Attending Physician's Medical Certificate of Death." This may allow completion of a death certificate for a patient who passed away before your clinical service began.
- Ministerial Order No. SA: 009/20 allowed for an expanded timeline of 72 hours for completion of the death certificate in community settings, but for the reasons stated above AHS still requires completion within 48 hours in acute care.

### **New Genetic Sequencing of Coronavirus**

Alberta Precision Laboratories is continuously monitoring the genetic code of the Coronavirus in Alberta, to understand how it is evolving in our population and to detect whether new strains are arriving from outside the province.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is constantly evolving, with an estimated 2-3 genetic mutations occurring each month. By monitoring its genetic code, and sharing this information with national and international health authorities, we are able to identify and track variations of the virus that may pose new challenges for diagnosing and treating the disease in our community.

We are closely watching for the new variant that was recently identified in the United Kingdom and has spread to other countries, but has not been detected in Canada at this time. Work is underway by the international scientific and public health communities to better understand the biological significance of this particular variant

Our genetic testing includes analysis of positive cases from individuals entering Alberta from other countries, including attendees of the World Junior Hockey Tournament in Edmonton, as well as the international traveler testing pilot program underway at the Calgary International Airport and the U.S. border crossing at Coutts.

We will continue to collaborate with international health authorities that are studying the UK variant to determine how it differs from the existing strains in Alberta, and whether we need to adjust any of our public health measures to identify its arrival and prevent its spread.

### **Paused COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers, Influenza Updates**

Due to the holidays, our COVID-19 healthcare worker testing [dashboard](#) and influenza updates have been paused until the new year.

Our annual influenza immunization campaign continues.

For staff, check [Insite](#) for options to get the flu shot, [resources](#) to support this year's campaign and guidance on what to do if you experience [influenza-like symptoms after immunization](#).

More on clinics for the public, including your families, is available on the [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\) website](#).

If you got your flu shot at [a public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please remember to complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#). This online form can be submitted with just the click of a button.

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message – Have a Safe Holiday**

With the holiday season upon us, we'd like to offer warm wishes for you and your loved ones, as well as hopes for happiness and good health.

This has been a difficult year for all of us and a tragic year for many. There have been many long days and nights, and we know there's still a long road ahead of us. Yet this can still be a season for hope and renewal.

I (Verna) will find joy this holiday season by thinking about all the positive things I've seen from you throughout the year. I've seen your strength, resourcefulness and resilience in the face of crisis. These things continue to inspire me every day.

In [this week's vlog](#), some special guests and I would like to offer our sincere thanks for everything you do and share some holiday wishes.



*Note: some interviews were held prior to the introduction of the current COVID-19 public health measures.*

### **Physician Diversity, Wellness and Leadership Development**

#### **Physician Wellness Zoom Room – New format: Group discussions will be included**

**Date:** Tuesday, January 12, 5-6 p.m. MST

**Topic:** Hope

**Co-Moderators:** Dr. Debrah Wirtzfeld, Associate Chief Medical Officer, Physician Health, Wellness, AHS, and Diversity, Dr. Jennine Wismark, Associate Chief Medical Officer, Physician Wellness & Development, Covenant Health

**Join:** [Here](#).

**Note:** *Tuesday, December 30 Zoom Room is cancelled for the holidays.*

#### **AHS resources on resilience, wellness and mental health**

- [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#)
- [Self-care Tactics](#)
- [Going Home Checklist](#)
- [How do I support someone who may be struggling?](#)
- [Health and wellness resources for leaders](#)

#### **Managing Seasonal Stress**

As we prepare for a different holiday season, more than ever, it's important to continue to take care of ourselves and continue to be there for each other.

Please remember that there are many resources available to support your health and wellness during this time. Visit the [Physician and Family Support Program](#) (PFSP) through the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) or call at 1-877-SOS-4MDS available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Additional resources are below:

- [www.ahs.ca/mdwellness](http://www.ahs.ca/mdwellness)
- [COVID-19 and Stigma](#)
- [Mental Wellness Moments](#)
- [Help in Tough Times](#)

Self-care is so important. To learn more, listen to [Our People Podcast – Holiday Reflections](#).

### **Doc of the Week – Dr. Vivian Ewa**

This week, Dr. Vivian Ewa has been nominated for the Doc of the Week. Dr. Ewa is the Section Chief for Seniors Care in the Calgary Zone and has provided exceptional and dedicated leadership during the COVID-19 crisis that has been nothing short of heroic. Alberta seniors have been hit particularly hard since the onset of the pandemic. Dr. Ewa, along with her teams, and her patient's friends and families, has had to endure the devastation and loss of Alberta seniors with COVID-19 this year. There has been no reprieve for these families or staff and physicians, and while they all deserve praise and acknowledgement, Dr. Ewa has shown exceptional compassion and dedication in guiding our senior's sites and leaders through a time of unique crisis and loss.

Thank you, Dr. Vivian Ewa, for your dedication and compassion to your teams as well as the patients and families you care for.

### **Doc of the Week Call for Nominations**

Do you know a physician who has gone above and beyond during the pandemic to shape and drive improvements for patients?

Perhaps a physician colleague has gone above and beyond to help support others during a difficult day?

Each week, we would like to take a moment to celebrate and thank the amazing physicians working across the province to provide high-quality care to patients, staff and colleagues across the province.

If you know someone who deserves to be celebrated, please email [CMO@ahs.ca](mailto:CMO@ahs.ca) with your suggestion, and a brief description of why.

### **Additional Resources for Physicians:**

- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria](#)

- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [CPSA's physician portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [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)
- [Spectrum](#) – A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- COVID-19 Questions? Contact your local Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC):
  - [ZEOC.South@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.South@ahs.ca)
  - [ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca)
  - [ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca)
  - [ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca)
  - [PCH.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca](mailto:PCH.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca)

#### For more information

- Visit the [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page](#) on the AHS website for more information or contact [AHS.ECC@ahs.ca](mailto:AHS.ECC@ahs.ca).
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).
- AHS Medical Staff can also view the daily update from the AHS CEO and Senior Medical Officer of Health (SMOH) by accessing their AHS email inbox.

*This update, provided every Friday, 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](mailto:CMO@ahs.ca).*

Sincerely,

**Dr. Dr. Francois Belanger**

Vice President, Quality, and Chief Medical Officer

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health