

# CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

July 16, 2021

*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.*

## **This week:**

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## **Guidance for COVID-19 First and Second Doses**

Two doses of any of the COVID-19 vaccines available in Alberta is considered a complete, safe and protective vaccine series.

Albertans who had their first dose of vaccine with either Pfizer or Moderna (mRNA) can book their second dose appointment [online](#), through a [participating pharmacy](#) or [physician's office](#), by visiting an [AHS no appointment clinic](#) or calling Health Link at 811. Anyone who booked their first appointment with either Pfizer or Moderna (both are mRNA vaccines) can book their second dose with the same product, or the alternative mRNA product.

Albertans who had a first dose with the AstraZeneca vaccine can call Health Link at 811 to book an appointment for a second dose of AstraZeneca, or an mRNA vaccine.

While a second dose of AstraZeneca can be provided as early as 28 days after the first dose, we encourage Albertans to wait a minimum of eight weeks between doses to ensure best effectiveness with this vaccine product.

## **Scientific Advisory Group Rapid Review**

### **Review of prolonged symptoms after acute COVID-19 infection**

While the long-term impact of COVID-19 on Albertans and the health system is not yet known, patients who are considered recovered from acute COVID-19 infection can continue to exhibit long lasting symptoms for weeks or months.

AHS Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) conducted a rapid review to help doctors and other healthcare workers plan care for people recovering from COVID-19.

These long lasting symptoms have been referred to using a variety of terms, however SAG recommends using “post-COVID conditions” or PCC as short form.

There are limited good quality reports on how common post-COVID conditions are. Most studies were conducted with people who had been in hospital or intensive care, so this may not be the same for people who stayed home with COVID-19. Based on the studies SAG reviewed, after hospital care for COVID-19, over 80 per cent of people have at least one symptom at one month and over half still have at least one symptom after three months.

Surveys of people with self-assessed PCC have suggested that one-third to half of people do not return to work (early retirement), half or more miss days of work, and around one to two thirds say they are less productive at work. However, a country wide study in Norway showed less than three per cent of those testing positive needed sick leave a month after a positive test.

A few studies describe people with PCC as requiring medical care after their initial infection through emergency departments, acute care, home care, outpatient specialty clinics, general practitioners, and telehealth lines.

PCC can impact both physical and mental wellbeing, and lead to increased use of health care resources. Because most people have been infected only in the last year, there are no long-term studies. Our knowledge is increasing as groups of people are assessed for longer after their COVID-19 infections.

For more information about this report, see the [Rapid Review](#).

### [MD Culture Shift](#)

**MD Culture Shift Newsletter:** [Issue 05: July/August 2021](#)

### [Doctor of the Week Call for Nominations](#)

Doctor of the Week shows the people, faces and stories of the physicians caring for patients across Alberta Health Services. Physicians for this feature are nominated by their colleagues. Contact [cmo@ahs.ca](mailto:cmo@ahs.ca) to nominate a physician to be featured here.

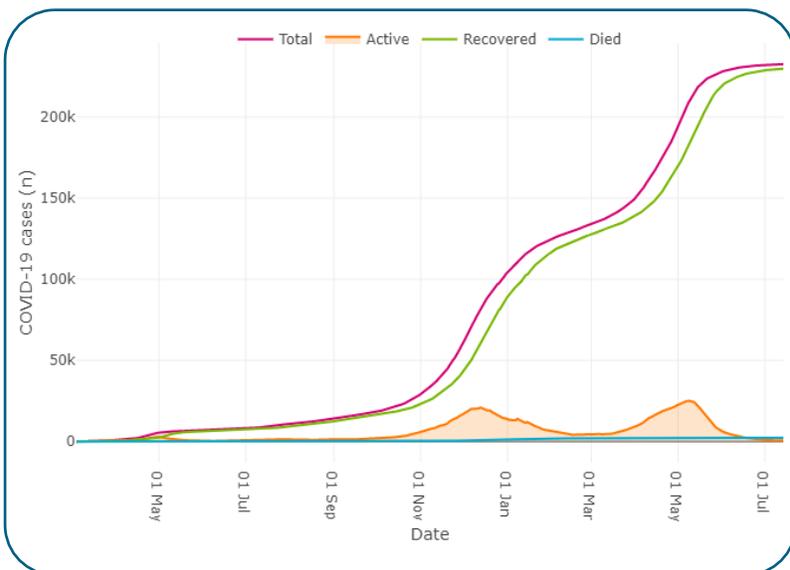
## Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update

### [COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta](#)

Alberta’s COVID-19 numbers continue to fall, with the province reporting the lowest number of active cases since last July. As of July 14, there are 578 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, a 45.2 per cent decrease compared to June 29. The table below shows the breakdown of active cases by zone.

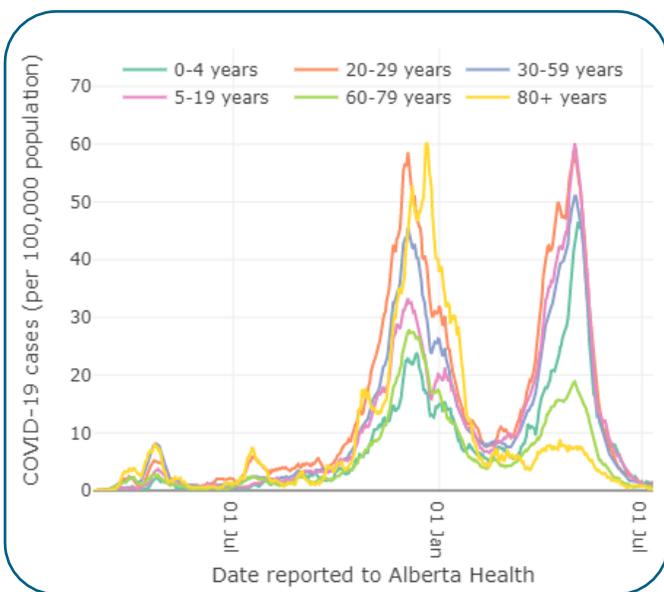
	Active Cases (as of July 14)	Active Cases (as of June 29)	Per cent Change
<b>Calgary</b>	291	565	-48.5%
<b>Edmonton</b>	118	158	-25.3%
<b>North</b>	100	181	-44.8%
<b>Central</b>	44	118	-62.7%
<b>South</b>	23	30	-23.3%
<b>Unknown</b>	2	3	-33.3%
<b>Total</b>	578	1,055	-45.2%

There was an average of 43 new daily cases for the 14-day period ending on July 14, compared to an average of 64 new daily cases for the seven-day period between June 24 and June 30, a 32.8 per cent decrease.



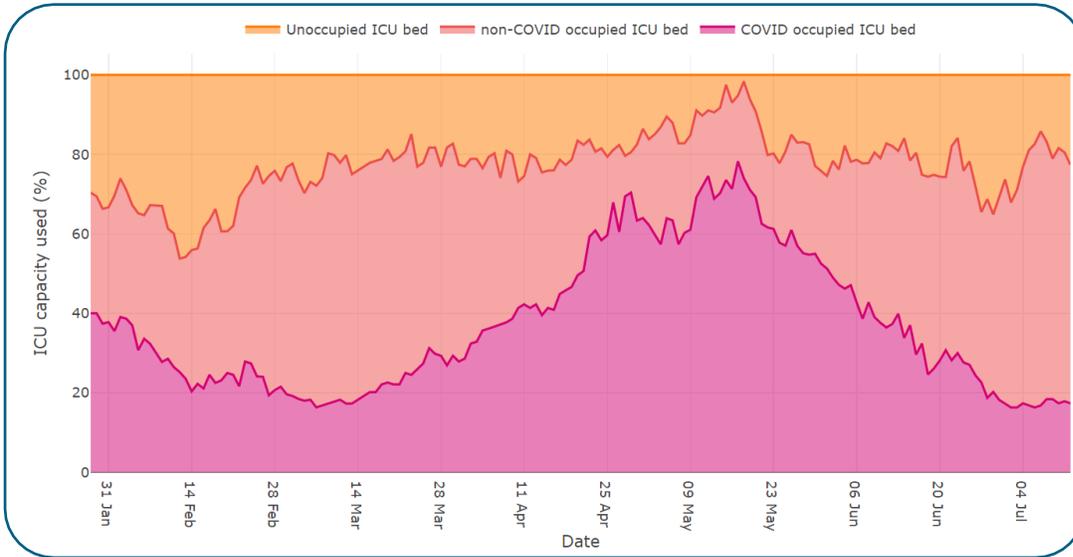
### Cases by age group

On July 11, individuals aged 20 to 29 had the highest seven-day rolling average of daily COVID-19 cases, with 1.43 cases per 100,000 people, while those 80 years and older had the lowest rate, at 0.14 cases per 100,000 people. A visual representation of these trends is provided in the figure below.

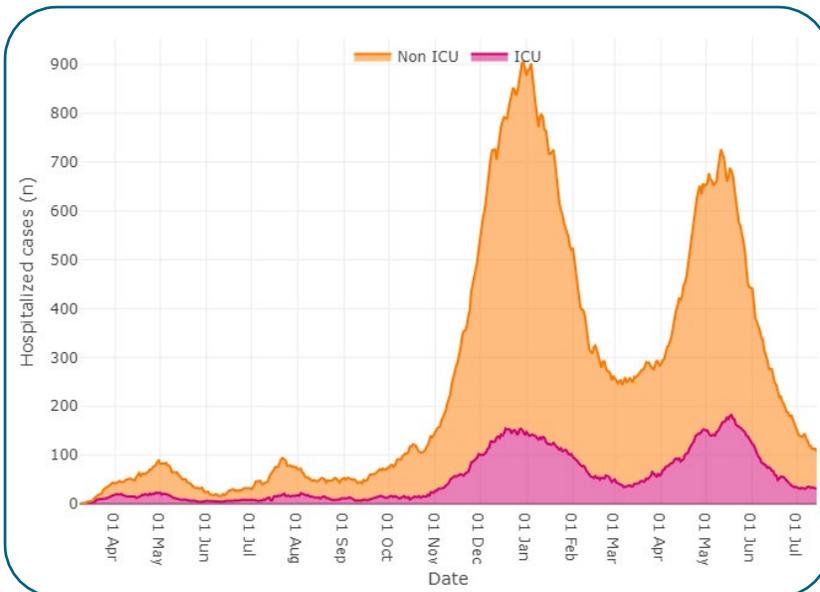


### Hospitalizations and ICUs

On July 14, 31 individuals with COVID-19 were in ICU compared to 33 individuals on July 1, a 6.1 per cent decrease. The most recent reporting, on July 12, puts our ICU usage at 77.4 per cent, with 17.4 per cent of ICU beds being occupied by a patient with COVID-19. The figure below is a visual representation of ICU capacity in Alberta.



Also on July 14, 76 individuals with COVID-19 were in non-ICU hospital beds compared to 112 on July 1, a 32.1 per cent decrease.



The table below shows hospitalization by zone as of July 14.

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
<b>Calgary</b>	52	18
<b>Edmonton</b>	32	11
<b>North</b>	13	1
<b>Central</b>	6	1
<b>South</b>	4	0

**Variants of concern**

The table below shows the proportion of active cases that are known variants of concern on July 14 compared to June 29:

COVID-19 Variant	Proportion of active cases (July 14)	Proportion of active cases (June 29)	Difference
B.1.1.7 (UK) variant	25.8%	40.5%	-14.7%
B.1.351 (South Africa) variant	1.7%	0.1%	+1.6%
B.1.617 (India) variant	24.6%	23.4%	+1.2%
P.1 (Brazil) variant	2.4%	3.8%	-1.4%
Overall	54.5%	67.8%	-13.3%

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

As of July 14:

- A total of 232,635 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 9,662 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.2 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 229,745 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- 2,312 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 11 deaths over the past two weeks. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- A total of 4.77 million tests have been conducted and 2.21 million individuals have been tested. From July 1 to July 14, 75,640 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 5,403 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 0.50 per cent to 1.26 per cent.

### **COVID-19 Immunization Updates**

#### ***Reminder to book your COVID-19 vaccine appointment***

First- and second-dose COVID-19 immunization appointments continue to be available to those aged 12 years and older.

Albertans are reminded to book their appointment as soon as possible, and can visit the [AHS website](#) for more information. There is a good supply of both Pfizer and Moderna vaccines at this time. Please encourage your friends, family and neighbours to protect themselves and others by getting immunized.

Appointments can be made [online](#), through a [pharmacy](#) or [physician's office](#), by visiting an [AHS no-appointment clinic](#) or calling Health Link at 811. This includes appointments for youth, pregnant women and immunocompromised individuals.

You can learn more about COVID-19 vaccines by visiting our [vaccine FAQ](#) or the [Government of Alberta website](#).

#### ***Accessing your health records***

If you haven't already, be sure to sign up for [MyHealth Records](#), a secure place to access your personal health data. By signing up for MyHealth Records, you can access the dates and types of vaccines you've had. This information can also be found on your Care After Immunization sheet that was provided at the time of immunization. We ask that people please do not call Health Link or public health for this type information.

#### ***Out-of-province, out-of-country immunization record submission***

Albertans who have received a COVID-19 immunization outside of the province, or outside of the country, can upload their immunization records for review and verification through a secure [AHS online portal](#), to then be added to MyHealth Records. This ensures your health record is fully updated and provides an accurate record of who has been immunized. Out-of-province and out-of-country immunization records can be submitted on behalf of yourself or your child / youth under 18 years.

### **Reducing Transmission Through Masking**

In addition to getting immunized, masking is one of the most effective ways to reduce transmission of the virus. As healthcare providers, we must continue to make safe choices to help protect those who are not fully immunized, patients under the age of 12, and those with immunologic conditions that limit their ability to respond to vaccines. We must remain vigilant and keep each other safe as we work towards ensuring all eligible individuals in Alberta receive their two-dose vaccine series.

To this end, we require all staff to continue to wear a mask in all AHS and Covenant Health facilities, provincewide. This masking mandate will remain in place at all acute care, continuing care and community sites, as well as in corporate and warehouse-type settings.

### ***Masking in non-patient care settings***

To protect one another, AHS staff working in areas with no direct contact with patients or patient items (e.g., corporate settings) are also required to continue wearing a mask at all times unless they are separated by at least two metres or a physical barrier, or are working alone in an individual office. In an administrative setting (e.g., Southport Tower, Seventh Street Plaza), staff may choose to wear a non-procedure mask (e.g., their own clean cloth mask).

### ***Who does masking apply to?***

This [masking directive](#) continues to apply to all staff, physicians, volunteers, designated support persons and visitors provincewide. AHS will review our masking mandate in late summer and will be making decisions, and potentially changes, based on the status of the pandemic at that time. The CMOH Order requires people to comply with all AHS and Covenant masking directives.

More information on continuous masking can be found on our [website](#).

### **Updated Fit for Work Screening Documents**

AHS has updated the [COVID-19 Fit for Work](#) screening documents to reflect changes to federal guidelines related to travel and current provincial orders. See the updated questionnaires below:

- [Standard](#) (physicians, staff – acute care/non-continuing care)
- [Standard](#) (designated support persons and visitors – acute care/non-continuing care)
- [Physicians and staff working at continuing care](#)
- [Visitors to continuing care](#) (including designated family/support persons)
- [Outbreak unit/area/site or unit on watch](#) (physicians, staff – acute care/non-continuing care)

The Online Fit for Work Screening Tool has also been updated and can be found at [ahs.ca/fitforwork](https://ahs.ca/fitforwork). Information related to screening for people visiting residents and patients is available at [www.ahs.ca/visitation](https://www.ahs.ca/visitation).

### **AHS Closes Emergency Co-ordination Centre (For Now)**

AHS closed its Emergency Co-ordination Centre (ECC) in early July. For 18 months, ECC staff led AHS' operational response to COVID-19. The ECC has been transformed into a COVID-19 Readiness and Recovery Centre that will provide ongoing COVID-19 support — and AHS will reopen the ECC in the event the virus starts to once again spread throughout the province.

ECC Planning Section Chief Chris McKiernan, a 20-year member of the British military, played the bagpipes as the ECC ended its mission, as you can see in this [video](#).

“Everybody has really risen to the challenge,” McKiernan says of AHS' pandemic response. “It is the end of a particularly stressful period of time, which is why I think I felt maybe a little bit emotional when I played the pipes today.”

## **Beyond COVID-19**

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Recruitment, Retention of Rural Healthcare Providers**

There are healthcare recruitment challenges across the province and the continent, particularly in rural areas. Rural healthcare providers are incredibly important to their communities. We greatly value the work they do every day to bring care to patients across the province, and we remain committed to supporting recruitment efforts to aid them in their work.

The Talent Acquisition team is one group that supports AHS recruitment efforts. They are working to increase our workforce in AHS, implement attraction strategies for the zones, and work with front-line managers on their individual and unique recruitment challenges.

Joining Verna to [tell us more about Talent Management's efforts](#) are:

- Megan Burgos, Director, Talent Management Strategies, Talent Acquisition.
- Jeff Gillis, Acting Manager, Talent Management Strategies, Talent Acquisition.

### **AHS Offering New Wellness Courses**

Physicians and staff looking to improve coping and communication skills, and to create healthier relationships, can now register for AHS' new [Wellness Exchange](#), an online weekly series for Albertans.

The one-hour sessions are designed to build skills in five different areas to help individuals cope with stress and adversity, while promoting positive mental health and well-being. They are open to the public, including AHS staff, physicians and volunteers.

The sessions run weekly starting July 20 and again Sept. 8. Participants can take any or all of the classes.

For more information on the classes, email [ahswellnessexchange@ahs.ca](mailto:ahswellnessexchange@ahs.ca) or [register here](#).

For additional learning opportunities on mental health, check out our Wellness Seminar Series on [Insite](#). Physician and staff supports and resources can also be found on our [Health and Wellness Insite page](#).

### **MyHealth Records: Lab Results Online for Patients via My Personal Records**

As of Feb. 1, more lab test results were made available in My Personal Records (MPR), found in MyHealth Records (MHR), the single access point for Albertans' personal health information. These lab results are viewable through the MPR application.

Making more results available online provides Albertans with more access to their health information and acts as an additional safety net for patient care within the system.

Through a series of rollouts, additional results are being added through to September 2021. To date, the following results are now viewable as soon as they are released by the lab:

- About 95 per cent of the most commonly-ordered (by volume) lab test results were viewable as of Feb. 1.
- More complex results in pathology and other areas are being included in MPR on Aug. 23.

Lab results ordered from all sites in Alberta, including labs ordered during inpatient and emergency visits will be included in MPR. New users will see an 18-month retrospective view of all lab results released at the time they begin to access MPR. Existing users will not have labs added retroactively, but they will be able to see the expanded lab results moving forward.

Patients can have immediate access to more of their own information. Providers may notice some changes in their patterns of work, and may wish to consider giving patients more information about the implications of different results at the time of ordering a test. Physicians and other providers will continue to have access to results through their usual delivery channels, as well as through Alberta Netcare.

To support Albertans:

- Alberta has created the MyHealth.Alberta.ca website, a trusted source of health information;
- MyHealth Records support is available at 1-844-401-4016, 24 hours daily;
- Technical assistance is available between 8:15 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. (MT), Monday to Friday; and
- Connection to 811 for health-related inquiries, including test results, is available at all times.

For more information about lab results online, please see these [FAQs](#).

To help provide information about the upcoming rollout on Aug. 23, Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health Services will be hosting a webinar for providers:

### **Real time release of complex labs in patient portals: What This Means to Your Practice**

**Speakers:** Dr. David Sidhu, Dr. Oksana Suchowersky, Dr. Julie Lauzon, and Dr. Brad Bahler

<b>Date</b>	<b>Weds., July 21</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>5 – 6 p.m.</b>
<b>Moderator</b>	Dr. Heidi Fell, Informatics Chair, Alberta Medical Association Dr. Steven Turner, ACMIO, Alberta Health Services.
<b>Register</b>	<a href="http://albertadoctors.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMtfgtpzkoH930GyhKui142mydM14uaJHA">http://albertadoctors.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMtfgtpzkoH930GyhKui142mydM14uaJHA</a>  If you are having difficulties registering, please contact <a href="mailto:Shelley.Russell@albertadoctors.org">Shelley.Russell@albertadoctors.org</a>

### **Ophthalmology Chartered Surgical Facility Request For Proposal Update**

Following an RFP in April 2021 to increase ophthalmology surgeries for Albertans, AHS is entering into negotiations with preferred proponents for ophthalmology chartered surgical facilities (CSF) in the Edmonton and Calgary zones.

This expansion will enable AHS to provide safe ophthalmology care for Albertans while delivering savings that can be reinvested to continue improving surgical access.

CSFs are one way to add capacity for publicly-funded surgeries as part of the pandemic surgical recovery plan, and as part of the Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI) being implemented to ensure all Albertans receive scheduled surgeries within clinically appropriate wait times. These independent facilities provide safe, low-risk surgeries without cost to patients, allowing hospitals to focus on emergent and more complex surgeries.

These changes will improve access, reduce wait times for surgery for patients and provide capacity for procedures that require hospital care.

Transition for procedures will occur over 2021, and AHS expects these providers to be providing ophthalmological surgeries in Edmonton and Calgary Zones no later than January 2022.

AHS will begin working with CSFs on a transition plan and will share more information about next steps with staff and surgeons as it becomes available.

If you have any questions, please see these [FAQs](#), or contact your leader.

### **Glycemic Management Policy Update**

The AHS provincial [Glycemic Management Policy Suite](#) has undergone its scheduled review, and is now available. Please refer to the updated FAQ document for detailed information regarding the

updates on the [Glycemic Management Policy Suite Resource Page](#). Other resources include a patient information handout and staff education video.

If you have any questions, or would like more information about the resources available; please feel free to contact the DON SCN at: [DiabetesObesityNutrition.SCN@ahs.ca](mailto:DiabetesObesityNutrition.SCN@ahs.ca). The DON SCN would like to invite you to visit their webpage for a description of the overall [provincial initiative to improve glycemic management](#) for patients with diabetes in Alberta hospitals.

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

- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [AHS Immunization Information](#)
- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Community Physicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria](#)
- [CPSA's Physician Portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [Government of Alberta Vaccination Updates](#)
- [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)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- [Spectrum](#): A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- 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.
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).

*This update 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. Francois Belanger**

Vice President, Quality, and Chief Medical Officer

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

