

CMO SMOH Notice for AHS Medical Staff

August 12, 2022

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.

Note: Recognizing some medical staff use an alternate email address instead of an AHS email address, some information is duplicated from the CEO Update to ensure all AHS medical staff have all up-to-date organizational information that may impact their practice.

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Medical Affairs

Monkeypox Immunization Appointments are Now Available Across all Zones

Albertans 18 and older who self-identify as meeting the [eligibility criteria](#) for targeted prevention of monkeypox, prior to an exposure, can book an appointment to receive monkeypox vaccine in nine cities across the province: Calgary, Edmonton, Edson, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and St. Paul.

Appointments are required. Anyone who is eligible and interested in receiving the monkeypox vaccine must call Health Link at 1-866-301-2668 to review eligibility and book an appointment.

AHS is further enhancing the opportunity for more eligible people in Alberta to receive the vaccine. Learn more at ahs.ca/monkeypox.

Support for Physicians

The [Physician & Family Support Program \(PFSP\)](#) continues to offer services on an individual basis that you can access by calling the assistance line at 1-877-767-4637.

Canadian Medical Association Podcast

A [Canadian Medical Association \(CMA\) podcast](#) about physician wellness and medical culture, hosted by psychiatrist and wellness expert Dr. Caroline Gérin-Lajoie.

MD Culture Shift

NEW: Check out the summer edition of the [MD Culture Shift Newsletter](#)

New Course Catalogue at MyLearningLink

[MyLearningLink](#) — AHS' Learning Management System — hosts more than 2,500 classroom, virtual and online learning opportunities.

Medical staff with AHS credentials can access MyLearningLink's vast [course catalogue](#), which now includes a brief course description and is available to search on Insite. Use this tool to find the self-directed or instructor-led learning opportunity that suits your goals, interests, or needs. There is something for everyone.

Visit the [Learning homepage](#) to find other educational opportunities that may interest you.

New Pasteurized Donor Human Milk Procedure Now Available

Effective July 15, the new [Pasteurized Donor Human Milk procedure](#) replaces all site-based donor human milk (DHM) guidelines. NICU operational leaders are responsible for the implementation of the new procedure at the unit level. For more information, please see the [provider education recording](#), or visit the [Insite page](#) (login required).

AHS Priorities

This message includes updates on the progress AHS is making on its 10 priority areas:

1. Alberta Surgical Initiative
2. Continuing Care
3. Digital Health Evolution & Innovation
4. EMS 10-Point Plan
5. Mental Health & Addiction Recovery
6. Public Health & Pandemic Response and Recovery
7. Quality & Patient Outcomes
8. Rural Initiatives & Engagement
9. Sustainability
10. Workforce Recruitment & Retention

Each week will include updates on specific initiatives connected to some of the 10 priorities. We have much to accomplish together in these areas, so we want to make sure our teams have the most current information on the work underway and the work ahead.

Priority: Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI)

The ASI will improve timely access to surgical care in Alberta. The goal of ASI is to ensure adult and pediatric patients receive scheduled surgeries within clinically appropriate timeframes.

Surgical wait list status update

We continue to work diligently to recover to pre-pandemic surgical status. Over the past four weeks, the average weekly volume for surgical activity is 97 per cent of our pre-pandemic surgical volumes. It is important to note that AHS is now using summer weekly baselines, which are lower than standard baselines. This is typically done over the summer months to account for summer vacation schedules.

Our total surgical wait list for adults sits at approximately 71,417, compared to approximately 72,860 at the beginning of May. In February 2020, before the pandemic, our total wait list was 68,000.

Approximately 80,300 surgeries have been completed in the 2022/23 fiscal year.

Partnering with Health Link for a surgical waitlist management project

In an effort to update data on surgical wait times for Albertans, and support surgical waitlist management strategies across the province, AHS is expanding a waitlist validation and surgical confirmation project initially piloted in Edmonton Zone. By validating provincial and Zone surgical

waitlists through surgical confirmation with patients, wait lists are expected to improve by up to 10 per cent across the province.

Through this project, patients scheduled for surgery will receive an automated phone call or voicemail from Health Link. Patients will be asked to confirm AHS has contacted the correct person and to follow up with the message centre.

As part of the process to confirm wait list status, patients will be asked for their provincial personal health number and birthdate to confirm their identity. **Note: Patients who hang up or do not call the number back will not see their position on the waitlist affected.**

Over the next few months, Health Link and the Surgical Waitlist Management team are working with the zones to develop zone-specific implementation plans.

For more information and updates on the ASI, please visit ahs.ca/asi.

Priority: Rural Initiatives and Engagement

This work is designed to strengthen partnerships with rural communities, to enhance and better support the rural healthcare workforce and to better meet the unique needs of Albertans living in non-urban communities.

Minister, AHS leaders tour three AHS zones

AHS leadership joined Health Minister Jason Copping at a series of engagement events in South, Central and North zones in June and July. In each community, there were events with internal and community stakeholders to discuss three questions:

- What is the healthcare system doing well?
- What are the current challenges within the healthcare system?
- What opportunities exist to address challenges?

Events were held in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, Lloydminster, Peace River, Slave Lake, Grande Prairie and Whitecourt. Additional sessions are being planned for the fall.

Throughout, internal and community stakeholders highlighted the quality of the care being delivered across Alberta. Many external stakeholders applauded AHS front-line staff for their dedication and commitment throughout the pandemic and acknowledged the toll that has taken on many. There was significant support and respect for healthcare workers. Other successes commonly raised were Connect Care, Netcare, the provincial healthcare system and its advantages, and the excellent care delivered once someone is “in” the acute care system.

Challenges focused on key areas such as workforce and the shortage of physicians and front-line caregivers in many communities, which is impacting service delivery and resulting in service disruptions. Access, wait times, organizational structure and the desire for more local decision-making were other key themes identified by participants. In terms of solutions or opportunities, many communities identified community partnerships, hiring incentives, more promotion of the benefits of a rural lifestyle, and “growing our own” programs or initiatives that bring the training to communities rather than requiring youth leave their homes to learn and train.

Overall, about 500 Albertans have participated in the engagement sessions and evaluations have been largely positive. Many Albertans expressed appreciation to the minister and AHS leadership for coming to their communities to host these conversations. Further sessions are planned later this summer.

COVID-19 Updates

Please note: Due to changes in reporting by Alberta Health, some statistics are no longer available.

COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

Hospitalizations and ICU Update

On Aug. 8:

- 720 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19, compared to 623 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on July 25, a 15.6 per cent increase.
- 28 individuals were in ICU hospital beds with COVID-19, compared to 26 individuals in ICU hospital beds on July 25, a 7.7 per cent increase.

Variants of Concern

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants.

From Aug. 2-8, an average of 72 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was five per cent Omicron BA.2 lineage, eight per cent Omicron BA.4 lineage, and 87 per cent Omicron BA.5 lineage.

As global data is updated, sub-lineage designations are refined which may affect lineage calls in Alberta. We continue to monitor our data and adjust as information becomes available. While BA.4 and BA.5 appear to transmit more readily than BA.2 due to their ability to evade immunity from immunization or prior infection, there is no evidence that they cause more severe disease than other Omicron lineages.

Wastewater Surveillance

Wastewater can provide an early indication of infection trends in a community. For wastewater surveillance comparing weekly averages:

- Ten sites increased by more than 25 percent compared to the weekly average two weeks ago. These sites were Lethbridge, Brooks, Strathmore, Lacombe, and all locations in North and Edmonton zones. The other 10 sites decreased or had no significant changes. These observations were from Aug. 8 at noon.

Frequency of reporting updates varies by sampling site. The Alberta Wastewater Surveillance Program is a collaboration between the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, APL and Alberta Health.

Other Notable COVID-19-related Information:

- As of Aug 8, 4,694 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 29 since the last report. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- As of Aug 8, 28,619 individuals have been hospitalized with COVID-19 in Alberta.
- From July 26 to Aug 8, 15,516 COVID-19 tests were completed, a 14-day average of 1,108 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity rate ranged from 19.2 per cent to 29.5 per cent.

Moderna for Children Six Months to Five Years Now Available

Moderna vaccine for children 6 months to under five years of age started rolling out on Aug. 2. While Health Canada approved this product for use in children six months to five years of age, the pediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine continues to be available to children 5 to 11 years.

Bookings are now available through the [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#) and Health Link 811. AHS will administer all doses for this age group as the scope of practice for pharmacists for administering immunization is five years of age and older. Clinics are available in First Nations using their current booking and infrastructure.

Informed consent will be required from a parent or guardian of children in this age group who wish to have their children immunized.

If parents haven't already, they can register their child online through the Alberta Vaccine Booking System. To ensure parents, guardians and families have current, reliable information and resources to help them make an informed decision about immunizing their children, an AHS webpage is available.

Designed to help parents, guardians and families make the best decision about the COVID-19 vaccine for their children, the ahs.ca/vaccinekids webpage features videos that provide advice from top pediatric specialists, [frequently asked questions](#), and [resources to help fearful children cope with needles](#).

As we roll out the vaccine to this important population, we encourage parents who have questions about childhood immunization to visit the site, talk to your pediatrician or family physician, or call Health Link at 811 to speak to a registered nurse.

COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — the Latest Numbers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers. These statistics provide the total number of AHS and 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. The testing data does not include rapid antigen test results for healthcare workers.

As of Aug. 9:

- 96,414 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 32,352 (or 33.56 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 15,724 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 931 (or 5.92 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,799 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 6,917 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 1,813 (or 26.21 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 651 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 30 (or 4.61 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 216 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](#).

Additional Resources for Physicians:

- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page](#)
- [COVID-19 Immunization Information](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Community Physicians](#)
- [CPSA's Physician Portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [How to Access AHS Insite and Email](#)
- [IPC Emerging Issues](#)
- [MD News Digest](#)
- [Physician & Family Support Program](#) - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)

Sincerely,

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