



Message from
Dr. Verna Yiu &
Dr. Laura McDougall

AHS Update: Most COVID-19 numbers continue decline but variant of concern cases more than double over past week

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

Today's Update

- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **COVID-19 Testing For Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers**
- **COVID-19 Immunization Update**
- **Government of Alberta announces Critical Worker Benefit**
- **New Federal Requirements for Air, Land Travellers**
- **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Vaccine Waste Mitigation Strategy**
- **Straight Talk From You — 'You Have To Know That It's Real'**
- **Photo of the Week**
- **Influenza Immunization Update**
- **Sharing the Love — Teamwork Gets Vaccines Where They're Needed**
- **Gratitude from Albertans**
- **Wrapping Up — Hearts and Flowers to All of You**

COVID-19 Status

This past week, many COVID-19 numbers in Alberta continued to decrease although we're now seeing the spread of more-infectious variants of concern.

Last week, Alberta Health had detected 68 variant of concern cases in the province; this week, there are 156 variant of concern cases: 149 these are B.1.1.7 variant (U.K. variant) and seven are the B.1.351 variant (South African variant). As of Feb. 10, these variants have only been detected in the Calgary, Edmonton and Central zones.

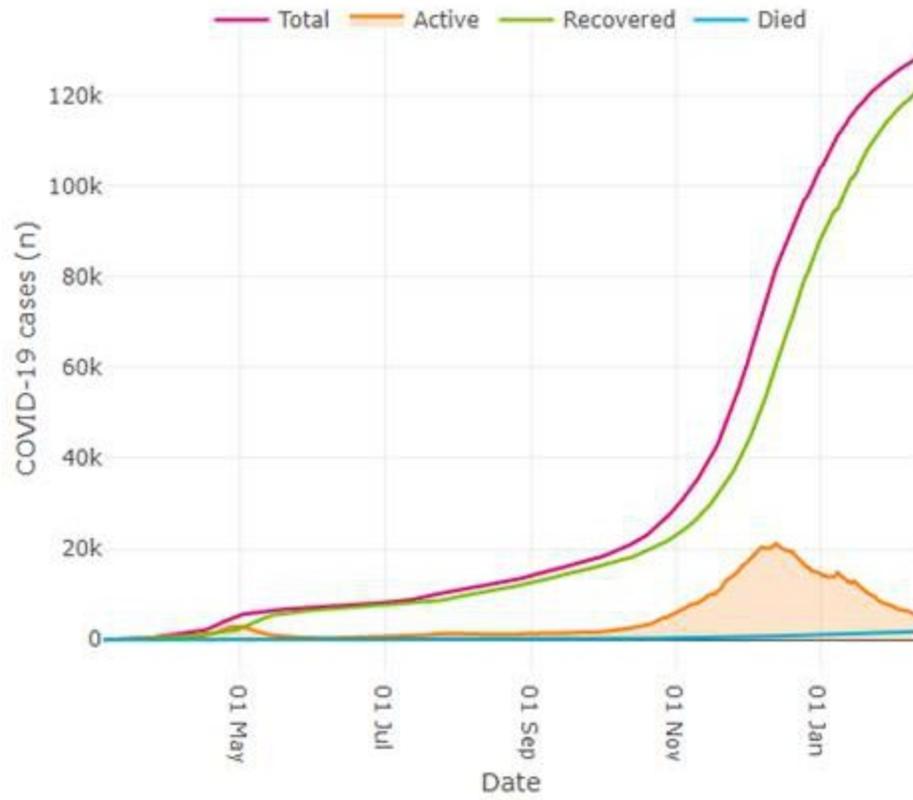
Otherwise, active cases, hospitalization numbers and ICU admissions are all down this week.

As of Feb. 10, there were 5,501 active cases in the province, down from 6,588 on Feb. 3, a 16.5 per cent decrease and the lowest number since the end of October. However, after two consecutive weeks of decreasing case numbers in all five zones, this week the active case numbers went up in the Central and South zones.

The table below shows the number of active cases for each zone for each of the last two weeks.

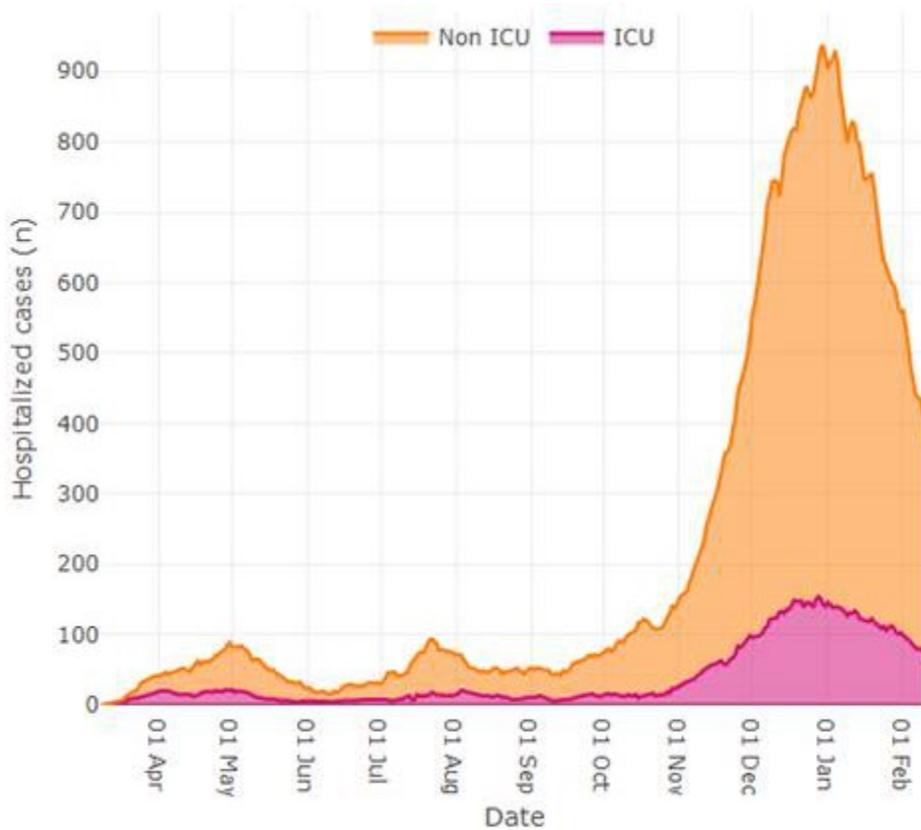
	Active Cases (as of Feb. 10)	Active Cases (as of Feb. 3)	Per cent Change
Calgary	2,202	2,710	-18.8%
Edmonton	1,616	2,117	-23.7%
North	703	811	-13.3%
Central	679	645	+5.3%
South	292	288	+1.4%
Unknown	9	17	-47.1%

There was an average of 331 daily new cases for the seven-day period ending Feb. 10, compared to 441 for the prior week, a 19.5 per cent decrease. Slightly more than half of all new cases were individuals between the ages of 20 and 49 years.



Hospitalizations and admissions

For the sixth consecutive week, there has been a week-to-week decline in the total number of individuals being treated in hospital for COVID-19.



On Feb. 10, there were 397 individuals in hospitals across the province compared to 515 hospitalizations on Feb. 3, a 22.9 per cent decrease. Of those individuals in hospital on Feb. 10, 71 individuals were in intensive care units (ICUs) compared to 94 on Feb. 3, a 24.5 per cent decrease. For the first time in months, the Calgary Zone has the most current hospitalizations.

The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Feb. 10 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
Edmonton	138	21
Calgary	148	30
North	48	4
Central	30	5
South	33	11

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- As of Feb. 10, a total of 127,921 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 5,615 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.4 individuals for every 100 cases.
- As of Feb. 10, 1,744 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 60 over the past seven days (Feb. 4 to Feb. 10). We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.

- From Feb. 4 to Feb. 10, 62,312 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 8,902 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 3.16 per cent to 4.38 per cent. As of Feb. 10, a total of 3,278,428 tests have been conducted and 1,782,832 individuals have been tested.
- For the winter school term, as of Feb. 10, AHS has confirmed 1,047 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 460 out of 2,415 schools (19 per cent) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.
- 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 provincewide R value from Feb. 1 to 7 was 0.87.

Things You Need to Know

COVID-19 Testing For Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#). These statistics provide the total number of AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Laboratories (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.

As of Feb. 10:

- 76,663 employees (AHS, APL and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,563 (or 5.9 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 1,540 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 465 (or 30.2 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 3,023 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,931 physicians (AHS, APL and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 193 (or 3.9 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 60 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, eight (or 13.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 133 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](#) and [dashboard](#).

COVID-19 Immunization Update

By the Numbers

As of 3 p.m. on Feb. 12, more than 141,000 total doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in Alberta, including:

- 49,700+ healthcare workers
- 52,800+ long-term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) residents
- 36,900+ LTC/DSL staff

In total, 48,049 Albertans have received both Dose 1 & Dose 2, and 45,285 have had Dose 1 only.

Care After COVID-19 Immunization

Although it's rare to have a serious side effect after receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines, please ensure you call Health Link at 811 to report any serious or unusual side effects.

- If you have side effects that are the same as COVID-19 symptoms, you must stay home and away from others (isolate), even if you think the side effects are from the vaccine.
- If the side effects go away within 48 hours, you don't have to keep isolating, and you can go back to your normal activities. If you've been told to isolate for other reasons, you must keep isolating.
- If the side effects last longer than 48 hours, stay home. Contact Health Link at 811 or do the [COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#) for Albertans to book an appointment for a COVID-19 test. If you don't get tested for COVID-19, you must stay home for 10 days from the start of your symptoms or until you no longer have symptoms, whichever is longer.
- If you only have redness, swelling or soreness where you had the needle, you don't need to stay home and away from others.

Additional care after immunization information can be found on [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](#).

I've Been Immunized Against COVID-19, Now What?

People who have received COVID-19 vaccine are still required to follow all measures put in place to prevent the spread of the virus. The vaccines being used in Alberta are good at protecting people from developing illness caused by COVID-19 but no vaccine is 100 per cent effective. Continuing to adhere to public health measures after being immunized helps protect the small percentage of people who are still susceptible after receiving their vaccine. Also, what we don't know yet is whether people who have been immunized can still become infected with the virus and spread it to someone else, even if they themselves don't have symptoms.

As we learn more about the vaccines and more people have been immunized, we'll be able to revisit the requirements for people who have been immunized. In the meantime, it's important people who have been immunized continue to follow public health measures in order to protect themselves and others from COVID-19.

Long-term Care and Designated Supportive Living Update

As of Feb. 12, more than 76 per cent of residents of long-term care and designated supportive living have received both doses of vaccine. The rest are slated to receive vaccine in the coming weeks.



Government of Alberta announces Critical Worker Benefit

On Feb. 10, the Government of Alberta announced a one-time [Critical Worker Benefit](#) of \$1,200 for eligible workers. AHS is currently working with the Government of Alberta on the application of the Critical Worker Benefit for AHS staff. This applies to all unionized staff at AHS who meet the minimum hour requirement of 300 hours between Oct. 12, 2020, and Jan. 31, 2021. Paid hours, including vacation and sick time but excluding overtime, contribute to the minimum hour requirement.

AHS' role is to distribute the payment based on the eligibility set by the Government of Alberta. AHS will be developing a process to ensure all eligible staff are notified and receive the benefit through our existing payroll process. We appreciate your patience as we establish a new process to issue these payments.

New Federal Requirements for Air, Land Travellers

Air travellers landing in Canada will have to quarantine in a hotel at their own expense, starting Feb. 22, [the federal government announced](#) on Feb. 12. The new requirement is intended to curb the spread of more infectious variants of concern.

The announcement comes two weeks after the federal government said air travellers returning from non-essential trips abroad will have to isolate in a federally mandated facility for up to 72 hours while they await results of their COVID-19 test.

Travellers will need to book a hotel stay of up to 72 hours in the city in which they first arrive in Canada: either Calgary, Vancouver, Montreal or Toronto.

Travellers who test negative for COVID-19 on their arrival test will be able to take a connecting flight to their final destination. Travellers who test positive will be moved to a designated quarantine facility.

Vaccinated Canadians will not be exempt from this new requirement. Travellers will still need to adhere to the mandatory 14-day quarantine period for returning non-essential travellers.

Also this week, the federal government announced that, as of Feb. 15, non-essential travellers entering Canada through a land border will need to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 72 hours of arrival. Starting Feb. 22, travellers entering Canada at the land border — including at Coutts, Alberta — will be required to take a COVID-19 test on arrival and toward the end of their 14-day quarantine.

Verna's Weekly Video Message — Vaccine Waste Mitigation Strategy

Even as we currently face a limited supply of vaccine, we continue to strive to immunize as many people as we can. With the vaccine shortage in mind, it is more important than ever that we avoid wasting any vaccine.

Our public health immunizers have been working to ensure there is minimal wastage by only preparing the amount of vaccine needed for appointments booked that day.

On rare occasions, a small number of doses may remain at the end of the day that need to be used within a short time period.

That's why we have updated our COVID-19 vaccine waste mitigation strategy to ensure we continue to roll out the vaccine to Albertans as quickly and efficiently as possible and minimize the number of doses that are left unused.

[Joining me \(Verna\) on the vlog to tell us more](#) are:

- Dr. Kristin Klein, Medical Officer of Health for Provincial Population and Public Health, and Co-Lead, AHS COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force.
- Andrea Thain Liptak, Executive Director, Public Health, Primary Care, CDM, CRS, Allied Health and CAS, and Zone Operations Lead, AHS COVID-19 Vaccine Task Force.

Kristin and Andrea share how we can prevent vaccine waste and how we prioritize who receives any leftover doses at the end of the day.



Straight Talk From You — ‘You Have To Know That It’s Real’

Straight Talk is a video series in which healthcare workers talk from the heart about what they’re seeing and experiencing at work and in their communities as COVID-19 spreads across the province. AHS is posting new Straight Talk videos every week on YouTube and sharing them through AHS accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Please feel free to share these with your networks and on your social platforms as you see appropriate.

This week, we highlight a video featuring Mandy Carter, a nurse clinician on the COVID-19 unit at Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary.



“You don’t have to be scared of COVID-19,” she says. “It’s not about fear. But you have to know that it’s real.”

You can see all of the [Straight Talk](#) videos on the AHS website.

Photo of the Week

Every week, we highlight a photo in this space that illustrates your efforts, compassion and achievements as we respond to the pandemic and support Albertans who come to us for care.



Dorothy Boothman, 98, receives the COVID-19 vaccine from registered nurse Brenda Claudio in Calgary.

To see all our AHS photos, visit our [Instagram Gallery](#) on the AHS website.

Influenza Immunization Update

As of Feb. 6, 1.53 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. Immunizations are up by more than 170,900 doses compared to the same time last year.

For the 14th week in row, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in the province. Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has tested 93,858 respiratory swabs for influenza from Aug. 23, 2020, to Feb. 9, 2021.

Check [Insite](#) for options to get your influenza vaccine, [resources](#) to support this year's campaign and guidance on what to do if you experience [symptoms after immunization](#).

[Click here](#) for more information on the influenza immunization clinics for the public. And if you got your influenza vaccine at a [public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#).

Be Well - Be Kind

Sharing the Love — Teamwork Gets Vaccines Where They're Needed

Since COVID-19 vaccine supply issues came to light in January, our teams have been moving vaccine around the province to ensure we deliver second doses within the allowable time frames and get as many people immunized as we can.

Most recently, South Zone sent about 1,500 doses of the Moderna vaccine to Calgary Zone, and Calgary Zone was able to provide South Zone with about 1,900 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

This reciprocal collaboration has ensured both zones have enough vaccine to support second doses of eligible healthcare workers and residents of long-term care and designated supportive living, and to meet their commitments well into the next week.

This is a great example of ongoing successful collaboration within the province and between zones. A huge thanks to all the teams that have been involved in shifting vaccine supply to get it to where it is needed most. Keep up the great teamwork!

— Dr. Verna Yiu and Dr. Laura McDougall

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 pouring in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share a few recent messages of thanks with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love](#) webpage on Insite.

Thank you each and every one of you. All your hard work and resilience definitely hasn't gone unnoticed. Stay safe.

— Christina

I continue to think of you and all you are doing to keep people the healthiest they can be. I will never forget.

— Isabella Bishop

A shout-out to the awesome, caring people who are treating people with cancer right now. These people work like a well-oiled machine and made me feel like I was the most important patient in their care. Never making me feel rushed or like just a number. Kudos to all of you, especially the ones that touched my life.

— Barb

Thank you for all of your hard work, and for being so resilient during these difficult times.

— Kennedy Lewis

I want to sincerely thank AHS North Zone outbreak team for the guidance they've provided our organization during our outbreak. The mere thought of having a COVID-19 outbreak was daunting. But the wonderful North Zone team has helped us manage the situation with sound advice and consistent communication. Thank you for supporting us!

— Stephanie Hudson

Wrapping Up — Hearts and Flowers to All of You

Sunday is Valentine's Day and we know many of you will be apart from the people you love that day because you'll be directly caring for Albertans, or behind the scenes, supporting colleagues on the front lines, and protecting people in the community. If Valentine's Day is all about love, and love is all about caring deeply for others, then it's clear that Cupid doesn't hold a candle — or an arrow — to all of you and your unwavering devotion to patients, residents and their families, as well as to each other. Every day, Albertans turn to us in a time of concern and crisis. We respond with prevention strategies, diagnostics and treatment — but also so much more. Offering words of kindness and comfort. Spending an extra minute or two answering a question. Even delivering difficult news with honesty and humanity. These are just some of the ways that you show how much you love what you do and, as important, how much you put your heart on the line to keep people safe and provide the best healthcare experiences for the people we serve. Thank you for everything you do, each and every day.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

