



## Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

### *AHS Update: Targeted public health measures implemented as province reports record numbers of active cases, ICU admissions*

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

#### Today's Update

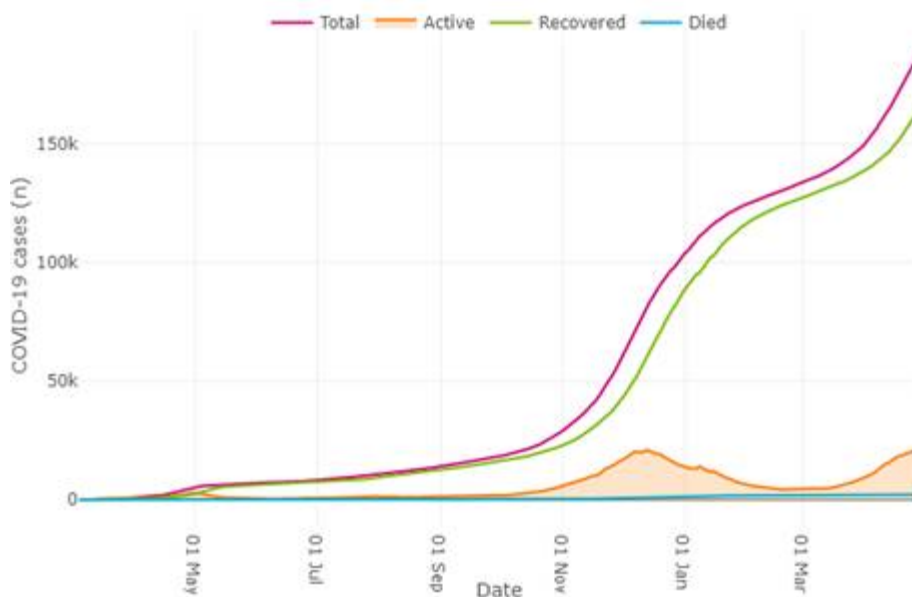
- COVID-19 Cases in Alberta
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## COVID-19 Status

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This past week Alberta surpassed 20,000 active cases of COVID-19, with ICU numbers not seen since last December, while the provincial government brought in targeted restrictions yesterday (April 29) to slow the spread of the virus.

There were 21,385 active cases of COVID-19 in Alberta on April 28, an 11.5 per cent increase over the previous week, representing 2,203 additional active cases. The new active case count eclipses the previous record of 20,976, set on Dec. 13.



The Calgary Zone continues to report the most active cases for the 16th week in a row, and all five zones reported increases in active cases, as you can see in the table below:

	Active Cases (as of April 28)	Active Cases (as of April 21)	Per cent Change
<b>Calgary</b>	8,962	8,380	+6.9%
<b>Edmonton</b>	5,916	5,102	+16.0%
<b>North</b>	2,994	2,708	+10.6%
<b>South</b>	1,064	970	+9.7
<b>Central</b>	2,395	1,994	+20.1%
<b>Unknown</b>	54	28	+92.9%

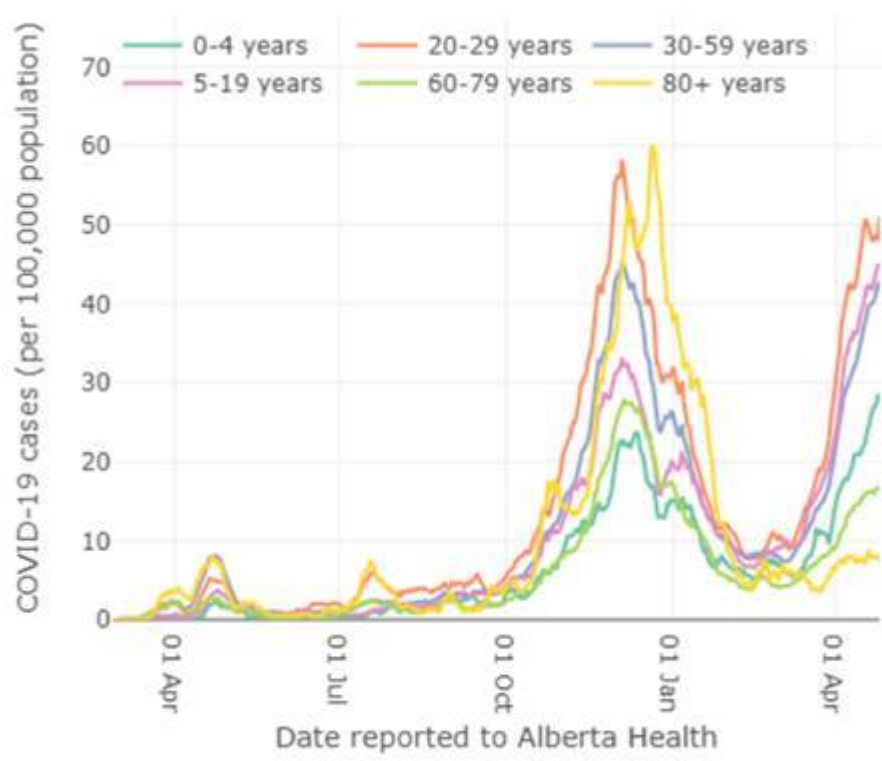
There was an average of 1,680 new cases per day for the seven-day period ending on April 28, compared to 1,569 cases the previous week (April 15-21), a seven per cent increase. The Calgary Zone had the highest total number of new cases this week with 4,702 (an average of 672 cases per day) but the Edmonton Zone had the highest per cent increase in new cases this week compared to last, with 3,269 new cases (an average of 467 per day) this week versus 2,932 new cases (an average of 419 per day) the previous week, an 11.5 per cent increase.

### Cases by age group

We are also seeing a shift in the number of cases reported in younger versus older age categories.

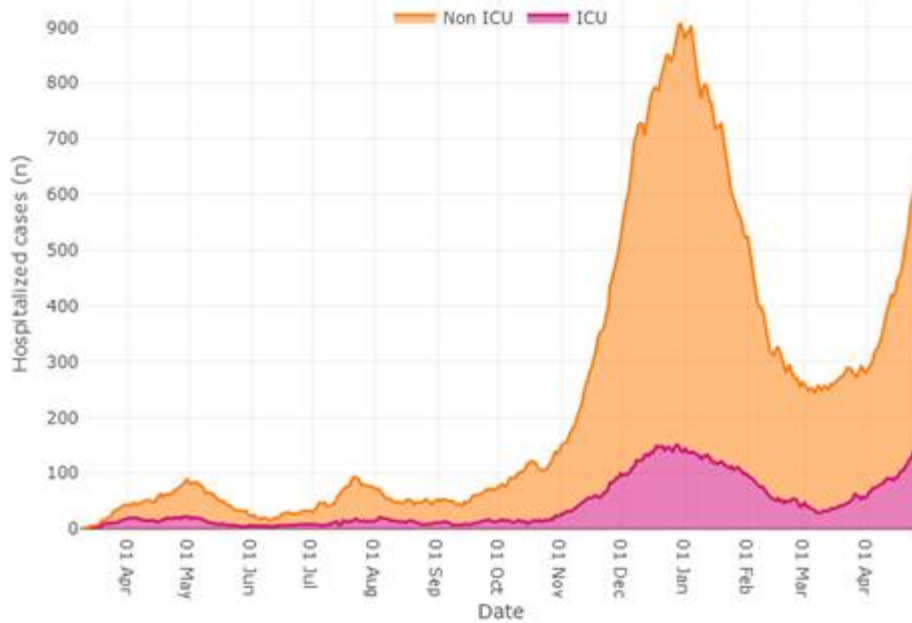
For example, during the second wave late last year, the seven-day rolling average of COVID-19 cases among those 80+ years peaked at 60.14 per 100,000 on Dec. 15, whereas during this third wave, the seven-day rolling average for this age group peaked at 8.86 per 100,000 on April 19.

Among school-aged children (5-19 years), the seven-day rolling average of COVID-19 cases peaked at 33.14 per 100,000 on Dec. 4, whereas the most recent highest seven-day rolling average for school-aged children was 44.86 per 100,000 on April 24. A visual representation of these trends in cases in Alberta by age group is provided in the figure below.



### Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

On April 28, there were 151 individuals being treated in intensive care units (ICUs) for COVID-19. This represents a 29.1 per cent increase in ICU admissions from the previous week when 117 individuals were in ICU on April 21. A total of 481 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds on April 28 compared to 413 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on April 21, a 16.5 per cent increase. For comparison, there were 731 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on Dec. 28.



The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of April 28 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
<b>Calgary</b>	254	62
<b>Edmonton</b>	224	56
<b>North</b>	69	17
<b>Central</b>	55	7
<b>South</b>	30	9

### Variants of concern

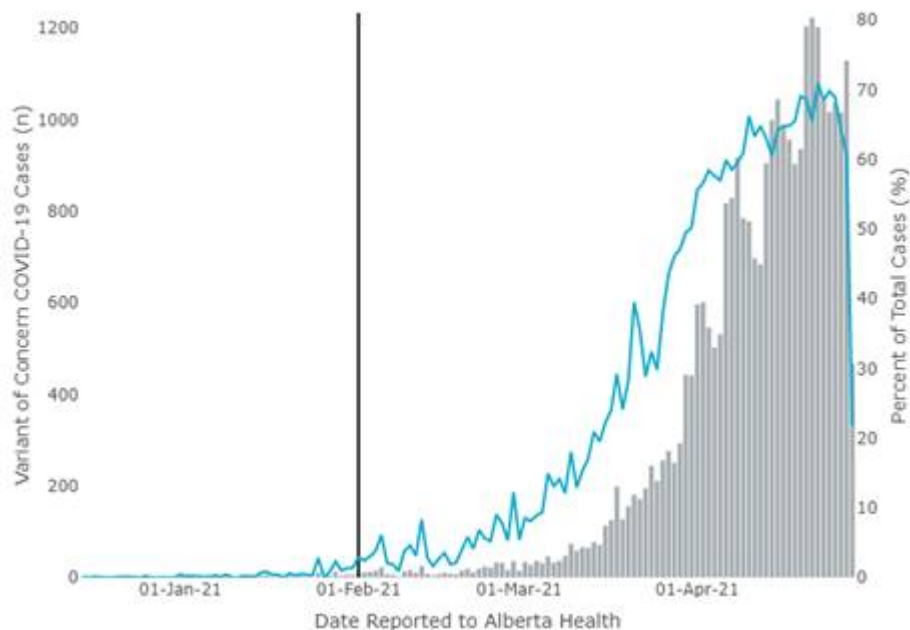
The full breakdown of the total number of reported variants of concern (VOC) by zone reported by Alberta Health on April 28 versus April 21 is presented below:

Variant	Total reported April 28	Total reported April 21	Per cent Change
<b>B.1.1.7 (U.K.)</b>	28,287	20,654	+37.0%
<b>B.1.351 (South Africa)</b>	77	59	+30.5%
<b>P.1 (Brazil)</b>	885	584	+51.5%
<b>B.1.617 (India) *</b>	1	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	29,250	21,261	+37.6%

*\* The first reported case of B.1.617 in Alberta*

Of the 29,250 VOC cases, 13,460 are active (62.9 per cent of total active cases), 15,708 people have recovered and 82 people have died (four per cent of total deaths).

The figure below shows new VOC cases (grey bars) and the percentage of VOC cases identified compared to other cases of COVID-19 (blue line). Between April 20 and April 26, the percentage of VOC cases ranged from 64.3 per cent to 71 per cent.



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

- As of April 28, a total of 188,727 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 7,803 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.1 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 165,267 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of April 28, 2,075 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 21 deaths from April 22-28. 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 April 22 to April 28, 120,464 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 17,209 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 8.56 per cent to 11.36 per cent. As of April 28, a total of 4.1 million tests have been conducted and two million individuals have been tested.
- 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 April 19 to April 25 was 1.04, whereas R value the previous week was 1.09. R values vary by zone and, this week, the Calgary Zone reported an R value of 0.98 while the Edmonton Zone reported an R of 1.10.
- For the winter school term, as of April 28, AHS has confirmed 6,307 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. Nearly half of schools in the

province (1,193 of 2,415) in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

## Things You Need to Know

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### **Government Announces Targeted Public Health Measures**

The Government of Alberta yesterday (April 29) announced [new targeted public health measures](#) for municipalities or regions where there are at least 350 cases per 100,000 people and 250 currently active cases.

At present, these new measures will go into effect in Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Airdrie and Strathcona County, and will apply to junior and senior high schools, and sports and fitness activities in these communities.

Moving forward, targeted restrictions will be applied to any communities or regions with a case rate above 350 per 100,000 people and 250 active cases, and remain in place for at least two weeks. If, after two weeks, the case rate falls below the threshold of 350 cases per 100,000 people, these targeted measures will be removed and only current provincewide restrictions will apply.

#### *New measures*

##### Schools – Starting May 3

- All junior and senior high school students (Grades 7 and above) will shift to online learning.
- K-6 students will continue in-classroom learning unless otherwise approved by Alberta Education to shift to online-learning.

##### Indoor fitness – effective April 30

- All indoor fitness activities are prohibited. This includes:
  - All group physical activities, such as team sports, fitness classes and training sessions.
  - All one-on-one lessons and training activities.
  - All practices, training and games.
- Outdoor fitness activities may continue under provincewide restrictions currently in place, including individual or household one-on-one training with a trainer.

##### Indoor sport and recreation – effective April 30

- All youth and adult indoor group physical activities, including team sports and one-on-one training sessions, are prohibited.
- Outdoor sport and recreation activities may continue under provincewide restrictions currently in place:
  - Outdoor team sports where two-metre distancing cannot be maintained at all times (such as basketball, volleyball, soccer, football, slo-pitch and road hockey) remain prohibited.

- Outdoor fitness training is allowed, as are physically distanced group fitness classes with a maximum of 10 participants.
- Outdoor group physical activity with different households must be limited to 10 people or fewer and two-metre distancing must be maintained at all times.
- All indoor recreation facilities must close. Outdoor recreation amenities can be open to public access unless specifically closed by public health order.

The government will implement a curfew where case rates are significantly high, specifically case rates above 1,000 per 100,000, and if a municipality or region requests it. Details will be announced prior to any curfew being implemented.

All other current public health restrictions, including masking, physical distancing, prohibitions on social gatherings and working from home requirements remain in place provincewide.

Health officials will continue to closely monitor the spread of COVID-19 to assess whether additional action is needed to reduce transmission and when these restrictions are no longer required.

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Update — Another 500,000 + Become Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine**

#### *By the Numbers*

As of noon today (April 30), more than 1,535,000 total doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in Alberta. More than 957,000 Albertans have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and more than 288,000 have received both Dose 1 and Dose 2.

#### *Launch of Remainder of Phase 2C and 2D*

With the remainder of Phase 2C and Phase 2D rolling out this morning (April 30), more than 500,000 additional Albertans are now eligible to book vaccine appointments.

This cohort includes front-line policing and provincial sheriffs, firefighters, Canadian Border Security Agency staff as well as staff and residents who provide or receive care in facilities not previously offered immunization. This includes front-line disability workers, as well as those who provide mental health and addiction treatment, children and youth group care, and other types of licensed supportive living.

Eligibility also includes caregivers of Albertans, such as designated family and support people of individuals in long-term care, designated supportive living and licensed supportive living facilities.

Caregivers included in this cohort include those caring for children under 12 who have an [eligible chronic condition](#) but were unable to receive vaccine due to age, as well as household contacts of [profoundly immunocompromised individuals](#).

These groups are all able to book their immunization appointments through [participating pharmacies](#), the [AHS online immunization booking tool](#) or by calling Health Link at 811.

#### *Proof of eligibility for Phase 2C*

Proof of eligibility is required for immunization of eligible workers as well as designated family/support persons. Details on specific requirements for each group can be found on the [Alberta Health webpage](#).

#### *Rollout of Phase 2D*

In addition to the remainder of Phase 2C, Phase 2D also rolled out today (April 30) and includes all Albertans between the ages of 50 and 64, as well as First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples between the ages of 35 to 49. In total, more than 2.8 million Albertans are now eligible to book the COVID-19 vaccine. Thank you to all Albertans who have booked to receive the vaccine and to those who have received the vaccine.

#### *Immunization eligibility expands*

Earlier this week, Alberta's vaccine rollout expanded to Alberta's meat-packing plants, as a part of Phase 2C.

Vaccine rollout at Alberta's meat-packing plants will involve more than 15,000 workers. This includes workers at both provincial meat-packing plants and federally inspected meat-packing plants. Appointments are being offered through a combination of onsite clinics, as well as appointments through AHS and pharmacies, to provide immunizations to workers in meat-packing plants across the province. Anyone who works at a meat-packing plant in Alberta should be prepared to show identification and proof of eligibility before receiving their vaccine.

For more information about these booking groups, please visit [ahs.ca/covidvaccine](https://ahs.ca/covidvaccine).

#### *AstraZenca/Covishield availability*

Some walk-in availability currently remains at AHS sites in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie.

Residents of Banff and the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo born in 1991 or earlier can access AstraZeneca by booking an appointment at participating pharmacies or at an AHS clinic.

There are no other appointments for AstraZeneca available for online booking or by calling 811 at this time. If anyone cancels a booking, it will be added back into the system. Those who are already booked to receive AstraZeneca at an AHS site will receive it.

As of April 27, at the end of day, AHS had administered approximately 69,500 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine through both booked appointments and via walk-in clinics provincially.



### *Second low-stimulus COVID-19 immunization clinic added*

A low-stimulus clinic opened in Spruce Grove on April 28, following the launch of the province's first such clinic in Calgary earlier this month.

Low-stimulus clinics are available for people with behavioural or special needs who require a quieter, less stimulating environment.

The clinic in Spruce Grove provides an environment with reduced sensory input, including dim lights and reduced noise. Client appointments are spaced to limit the number of individuals in the clinic during the assigned hours. Dedicated, private clinic spaces also contribute to a reduction in sensory stimulus during the immunization appointment.

Families and clients are encouraged to use personal comfort items to provide distraction.

Appointments at these clinics can be made by calling Health Link 811, where registered nurses can perform an assessment and make a referral.

AHS will continue to monitor the demand for this service and may be able to open other similar clinics, depending on the need and the teams' capacity.

For more information, visit the [COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#).

### *Changes to testing requirements*

As cases continue to rise, we are working to keep wait times for testing as low as possible. Close contacts are now offered testing for COVID-19 as soon as they are identified.

If they experience symptoms at any point after that first test, they can get tested again. Otherwise, they must remain in quarantine until 14 days have passed and, as of today (April 30), are no longer requested to have a second test.

If someone has a second test booked, and has no symptoms, this appointment should be cancelled to free up capacity in the system and shorten wait times for others.

For those who have a second test booked and have symptoms, the booking should be kept. Testing remains a critical part of breaking the chain of transmission.

Please see [Alberta Health Isolation and Quarantine Requirements](#) for more information.

### **Critical Care Triage Framework Drafted**

AHS has drafted the Alberta Critical Care Triage Framework as a planned and pre-determined provincewide approach to guide our response should the demand for

life-sustaining critical care support become greater than the available resources either during the current COVID-19 pandemic, future pandemics, or other disasters.

Resources can range from beds, ventilators, life-saving equipment, healthcare workers and medicines.

The framework encompasses specific protocols for both adults and children, and has been developed utilizing the best available literature with the input of health professionals and ethicists, as well as patient and family advisors for critical care within Alberta. Further consultation has also been completed with several advocacy groups. The protocols ensure a fair and equitable process is applied to all Albertans.

We have not needed to use these protocols at any time during the COVID-19 pandemic and, at this point, we do not anticipate having to do so. However, it is important to be ready and AHS is taking steps to ensure we are prepared today and for the future.

The triaging of critical care resources will ONLY occur at a time when clinical demand outstrips the health system's ability to provide for all who might potentially benefit and after all efforts have been exhausted to add surge capacity and move patients and/or resources within the province to meet demand.

If activated, triage will be provincial in scope; applicable to all health facilities and critical care units in Alberta.

Additional information and resources are available [here](#).

### **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 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 April 28:

- 75,162 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,969 (or 6.6 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 3,047 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 522 (or 17.1 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 1,922 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 5,231 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 221 (or 4.2 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 139 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 18 (or 12.9 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 82 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](#).

### **Updated Information on Aerosol Transmission, PPE**

Over the past 14 months, AHS has continued to monitor information and research from around the world on best practices for preventing and controlling the transmission of COVID-19. Based on our ongoing reviews, we have adapted our guidelines and protocols over time to reflect this emerging evidence.

You can read about the latest research on aerosol transmission and PPE [here](#) or view the [video](#) below. Our primary responsibility is to keep our staff and patients safe. We take this seriously and ensure this is the first and foremost priority in all decision-making processes.

PPE Question of the Week

Have we learned anything new about COVID-19 transmission since the pandemic started?

Dr. Mark Joffe answers PPE question of the week.

### **Rapid Point-of-Care Testing Surpasses 100K Milestone**

Rapid point-of-care testing is an important pillar of Alberta's COVID-19 testing program, providing faster diagnosis to help reduce spread of the virus in our communities. We'd like to thank the teams at Alberta Precision Laboratories and AHS who have now completed more than 100,000 rapid tests on those with symptoms and/or close contacts since the launch of rapid testing last December. Thousands more rapid tests are also being used to screen workers in long-term care and supportive living facilities, while Alberta Health [continues to expand](#) use of rapid testing for screening in private-sector workplaces, schools and other settings. This week, we shared a [new video](#) that gives Albertans a better sense of what they can expect if they choose to receive a rapid test when they arrive at their COVID-19 testing appointment.

Alberta has now completed more than four million tests on two million people since the pandemic began. Half of these tests have been completed by APL's provincial laboratories in Calgary and Edmonton, and Calgary's South Health Campus lab has completed [more than one million](#). You can also learn more about our testing program and find answers to common questions about COVID-19 testing on our new ['Science of COVID-19 Testing'](#) webpage.



### **COVID-19 Immunization Campaign – Stick with the Facts**

Next week, AHS will be launching an awareness campaign to help teams address different feelings and concerns about COVID-19 immunization. We strongly encourage all healthcare workers to get immunized as soon as they are eligible. This campaign will help our people create safe spaces to have conversations about COVID-19 immunization. You can expect to see new posters, Zoom background, updates to our web pages, blogs and other information resources. In the meantime, check out these resources below:

- [Worker Safety Moment – Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Immunization](#)
- [Myth busters information sheet one-pager](#)

### **Even When Vaccinated, Stay Vigilant**

All employees, whether vaccinated or not, must follow all safety practices to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

This means following all safety measures in place — such as completing your daily [fit for work screening](#) even after you have been vaccinated and adhering to all [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) measures (including [continuous masking and eye protection](#)), [washing your hands](#) regularly and [physically distancing](#).

Whether you are vaccinated or not, please remember to stay home when sick. If you have side effects that are the same as COVID-19 symptoms after receiving the vaccine, you must stay home and away from others (isolate), even if you think the

side effects are from the vaccine. For more information, please see the COVID-19 care after immunization [here](#).

Complete the [Self-Assessment Tool](#) to determine if you need COVID-19 testing or contact Health Link. Talk to your leader if you have questions or if you are unsure if your symptoms should require you to stay home.

### **Process Improvement Available to Support Teams**

As part of our ongoing response to COVID-19, the process improvement team is available to support AHS staff and physicians in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of processes. Recent team projects include partnering on lab logistics and vaccine distribution.

Watch this [new video](#), which showcases the team's pandemic-response efforts to date, with a testimonial from Brigitte Killian, a unit manager at South Health Campus.

To request support or if you have any questions please email [aiw@ahs.ca](mailto:aiw@ahs.ca).

### **Acute Care Visitation Directive Updated**

Updates were recently made to the [acute care designated support and visitor access directive](#).

All site leaders must be familiar with the directive requirements, as they have been updated to clearly reflect expectations that sites comply with the [guidance](#).

A new [directive orientation video](#) has been developed to support in this learning.

Questions? Email [policy@ahs.ca](mailto:policy@ahs.ca).

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Looking Back at Past Pandemics**

One of the ways we learn and grow is through relating to others and their lived experiences. There are many stories of hope, resilience and inspiration from our people and from others around the province, as we come together to pull through this challenging time. As we reflect on these stories, we see that, for many, this is our first time living and working through a pandemic, while there are others who have been through this before.

Joining me (Verna) this week to [look back and see what we have overcome, how it relates to our current experience, and what we can learn from the past](#), are:

- Colin Zieber, Senior Operating Officer in the South Zone.
- Colin's mother, Treva Louise Zieber, who worked as a nurse both in Calgary and Edmonton during polio and tuberculosis outbreaks.

It's a unique vlog this week and I encourage you to watch for a message of hope and a reminder of how we are making history.



## Be Well - Be Kind

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### **Thank You for Good Hand Hygiene**

On May 5, we would like to recognize STOP! Clean Your Hands Day by saying “thank you.” Hand hygiene has been a daily topic of conversation during the COVID-19 pandemic — and you have all stepped up. Thank you for taking the time to clean your hands this year. It’s making a difference.

We also want to personally thank all those individuals who were able to continue performing hand hygiene reviews during this time.

Hand hygiene is the single most effective action to prevent infection. Remember to keep up the good work – clean your hands, do it often and do it properly. Also, it’s OK to remind others to clean their hands.

As well, we want to encourage you to have a look at the newly updated [Provincial Hand Hygiene policy and procedure](#).

You are also invited to attend some Infection Prevention and Control information sessions on hand hygiene on May 11 and 19. So again, thank you and keep up the good work and visit [AHS.ca for more information on STOP! Clean Your Hands Day and the hand hygiene information sessions](#).

### **Mental Wellness Moment — Marking Mental Health Week**

Mental Health Week runs May 3-9 and, to mark the occasion, Dr. Nicholas Mitchell — AHS Provincial Medical Director for Addiction and Mental Health — [talks about what can put your mental health at risk, what to remember if you’re struggling, and what you can do to be or stay mentally well](#).





### **Building Your Mental Fitness**

As we approach [Health and Safety Week](#) and [Mental Health Week](#), showing kindness to yourself through self-care is critical in supporting your mental wellness.

In the same way you improve your physical fitness through exercise, you can improve your mental fitness through regular practices that boost your resilience. Building resiliency occurs when you feel a sense of belonging and can manage what affects you personally. [Resilience](#) helps you to “[bounce back](#)” from difficult experiences or significant stress.

Build your mental fitness by using the resources below:

- [Going Home Checklist](#)
- [Conversation about mental health](#)
- [EFAP Resilience App](#)
- [Wellness seminars](#)

Confidential supports are always available through the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) at **1-877-273-3134** available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are many other resources in the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#).

If you have questions, contact [wellness@ahs.ca](mailto:wellness@ahs.ca).

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

*My husband was in the ICU for almost two weeks. For a while, he was in a coma and on a ventilator. The nurses were excellent. They patiently answered all my questions, never failed to provide me an update when they could, and tirelessly arranged video calls with my husband even though they had to put on a lot of (PPE) over and over again when they entered his room. In one of my darkest days, the nurses in the ICU had given me hope. Knowing that my husband is under the care of this kind and excellent medical team, I was able to function normally. My husband is now on his way to recovery (still in the hospital but out of ICU) and I will never forget these beautiful people who helped our family. Someday, I will return the favour. Thank you, AHS. My family is indebted to you.*

— Aileen

### **Wrapping Up — Thank You**

This has been a long weekly message about a really long week in which the rising numbers — of new and active cases, of hospitalizations and ICU admissions — are all concerning. So we'd like to end this week's message with a simple thank you for all you've done and all you continue to do during this pandemic. The past 14 months have been unrelenting for everybody. We can't urge you enough to reach out for support if you need it (see Building Your Mental Fitness item).

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

#### **Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

#### **Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

