



Message from
Dr. Verna Yiu &
Dr. Laura McDougall

AHS Update: Number of active cases reaches lowest point since last July

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

Today's Update

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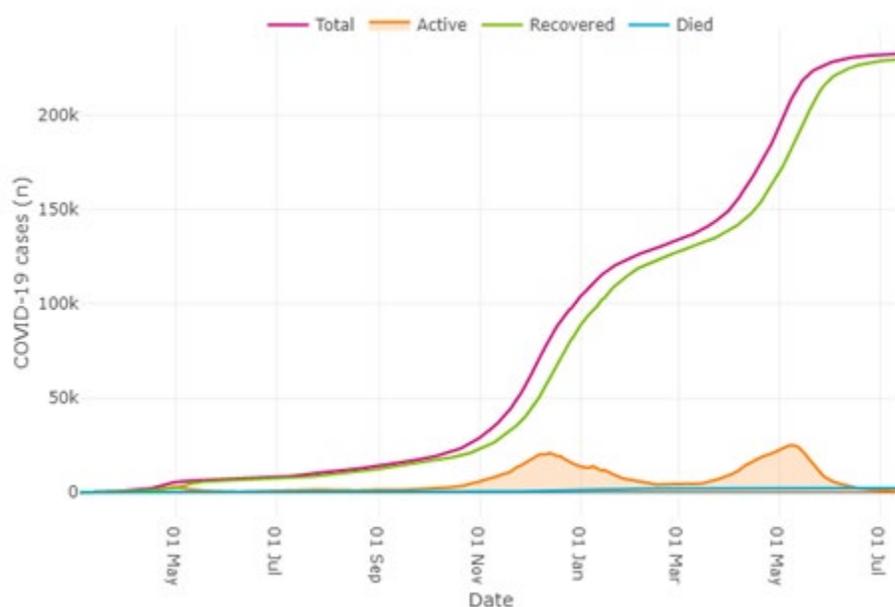
We would like to recognize that our work takes place on historical and contemporary Indigenous lands, including the territories of Treaties 6, 7 & 8, and the homeland of the Métis. We also acknowledge the many Indigenous communities that have been forged in urban centres across Alberta.

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.

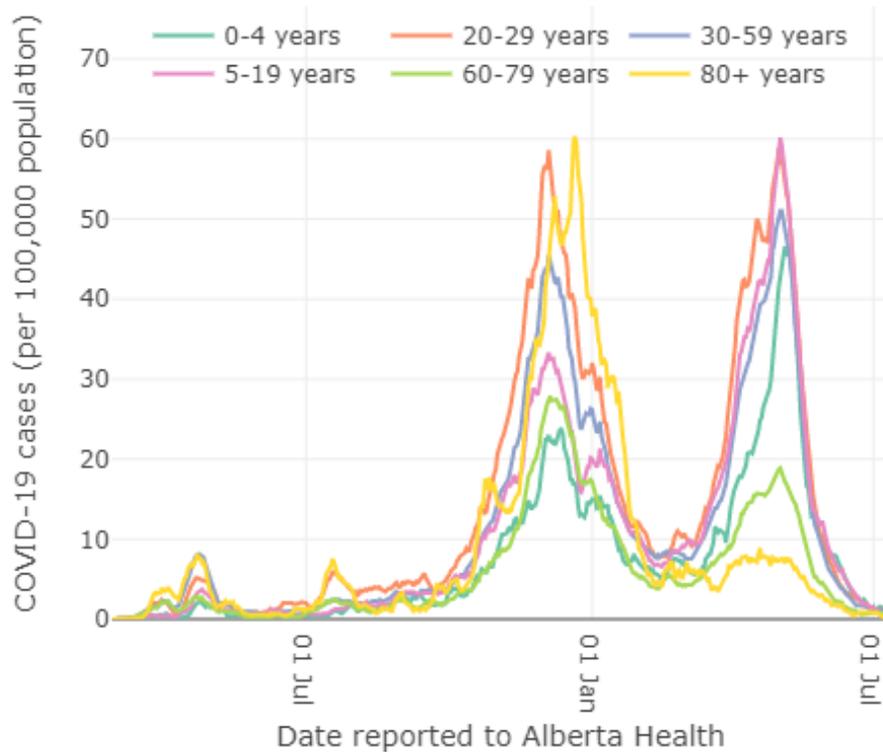
	Active Cases (as of July 14)	Active Cases (as of June 29)	Per cent Change
Calgary	291	565	-48.5%
Edmonton	118	158	-25.3%
North	100	181	-44.8%
Central	44	118	-62.7%
South	23	30	-23.3%
Unknown	2	3	-33.3%
Total	578	1,055	-45.2%

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.

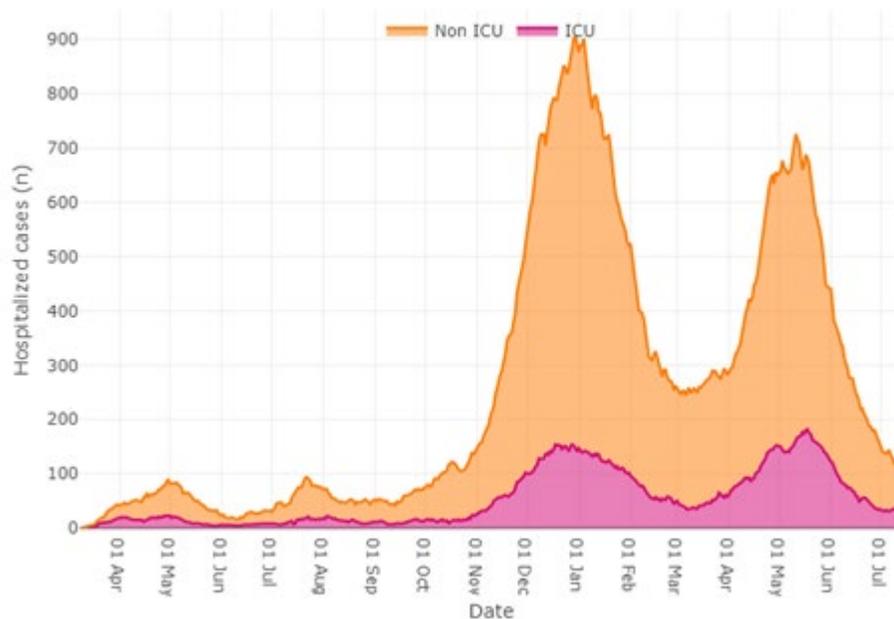


Hospitalizations and ICUs

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
Calgary	52	18
Edmonton	32	11
North	13	1
Central	6	1
South	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.

- As of July 14, 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.
- 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. As of July 14, a total of 4.77 million tests have been conducted and 2.21 million individuals have been tested.

Things You Need to Know

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 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](#).

Fit for Work Screening Documents Updated

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](#) (staff – acute care/non-continuing care)
- [Standard](#) (designated support persons and visitors – acute care/non-continuing care)
- [Staff working at continuing care](#)
- [Visitors to continuing care](#) (including designated family/support persons)
- [Outbreak unit/area/site or unit on watch](#) (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. Information related to screening for people visiting residents and patients is available at ahs.ca/visitation.

COVID-19 Immunization Update

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.

Take the PPE Safety Coach Program Survey

Since launching last November, the Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program is gaining momentum, with more than 1,200 people taking part. The program is a peer-to-peer program aimed at increasing the proper selection and safe use of PPE in front-line settings to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses, such as influenza. This program is meant to be permanent and will be supported beyond the pandemic response.

AHS is launching a [survey](#) to evaluate the effectiveness of the Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program and to see if there are ways to improve the program and uptake. Site leadership and unit management are encouraged to participate in the survey.

The survey takes five to 15 minutes to complete and will be open until Aug. 15. Participation is voluntary. All responses will remain anonymous.

Site leadership and unit management are encouraged to share the survey with AHS staff and physicians to participate.

As a friendly reminder, as part of the provincial program, we encourage site leadership and unit management to identify a minimum of two coaches per unit or program area with the intent of having a coach available and accessible on every shift.

If you are interested in participating in the program or have questions about the [survey](#), please reach out to ppesafetycoach@ahs.ca or visit ahs.ca/ppesafetycoach.

AHS Closes Emergency Co-ordination Centre

AHS closed its Emergency Co-ordination Centre 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 the video below](#).



“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.”

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 me (Verna) today 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.



Introducing the IT Service Desk Hub

Tonight at 11:59 p.m., Information Technology is launching the new IT Service Desk Hub. This replaces the existing vFire service management tool that supported the IT Service Desk. It will be your go-to resource for all IT service-related requests.

The IT Service Desk Hub will have a modern look and feel, and feature user guides and tools to help users get started. No formal training is required.

Users will be able to log many IT service-related requests, including but not limited to:

- Requests for computers, software, applications and mobile devices.
- Requests for access to the AHS network, shared drives and remote access.
- Non-urgent issues with your computer, printer, software, email or applications.

Urgent matters should continue to be directed to the [IT Service Desk and Solution Centre](#) at 1-877-311-4300.

Note: Responses to staff requests and IT tickets to the IT Service Desk Hub will come from albertahealthservices@service-now.com. As well, you will still be able to view the status of any tickets you submitted prior to July 16 in the old service management tool.

AHS Boosting Cybersecurity

AHS is often the target of cyber-attacks, which attempt to access, steal or corrupt personal, business or financial information, including login credentials, passwords, credit card numbers and other sensitive information.

To protect AHS and our people, a new process has been established to connect with staff on various matters of cybersecurity. This could include informing staff members that:

- Their email account may have been compromised, and could have occurred due to signing up to an external service with their AHS email.
- Their personal data may have been exposed due to a cyber-attack.
- Their email account clicked malicious links in a phishing email and actions may be required to ensure any risk is addressed.
- They have been identified by the AHS phishing campaign as needing some extra cybersecurity support/education.

Staff will receive these messages from Info.Cybersecurity@ahs.ca. Should you receive a message from this email address, please read it as quickly as possible and follow its instructions. Doing so will help protect not just AHS information but also your personal information and the information of all Albertans. Please continue to report any suspicious emails by using the “report phishing” button in Outlook.

Learn more about phishing, spam and suspicious emails on [Insite](#).

Ophthalmology RFP Update

Following a request for proposal (RFP) in April 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 the 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.

Elmer Rattlesnake Making Progress

In April, we first told you about Elmer Rattlesnake, a central Alberta teacher and powwow singer with COVID-19, who has been in the intensive care unit (ICU) at Red Deer Regional Hospital Centre since February.

He is making progress and getting up and around. The photo below shows the 61-year-old Rattlesnake attending a sundance last month in Maskwacis, a visit coordinated by his ICU healthcare team and Maskwacis Health.

Physicians and staff are committed to facilitating culturally appropriate care for Indigenous patients and families at the Red Deer hospital. Rattlesnake also regularly takes traditional medicines provided by his family and, earlier this year, he was able to [view and listen to drumming circles](#) held for him directly outside his room.



Foundation Hosts Inaugural Drive-in Concert Fundraiser

As things begin returning to normal, many of you may be looking for events and activities that you and your families can take part in safely this summer.

One such event is the Leduc Community Hospital Foundation's inaugural Bringin' the Country Back Drive-In Concert. Taking place on this Sunday, July 18, this family-friendly event features George Canyon and Aaron Pritchett performing two shows, with all funds raised supporting the foundation's current [wish list campaign](#).

The shows will take place rain or shine at 6:30 p.m. and 9 p.m. at Castrol Raceway, near Leduc. Tickets are sold as one ticket per vehicle and are available for purchase until the second show starts on Sunday.

If you are interested in attending, the foundation is offering AHS staff a \$10 discount code toward general admission tickets. To use the discount, enter WEAREAHS when you check out. For more information on tickets, visit [here](#).

Be Well - Be Kind

AHS Offers New Wellness Courses

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 or [register here](#).

For additional learning opportunities on mental health, check out our Wellness Seminar Series on [Insite](#).

Staff supports and resources can also be found on our [Health and Wellness Insite page](#).

Recharge This Summer

It's a great time to recharge with summer in full swing. Engaging in [self-care](#) and [physical activity](#), being [outdoors](#), [disconnecting](#) from electronics, boosting your [resilience](#) and learning how to have [conversations about mental health](#) can all help.

Check the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports, or contact the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) for confidential support. Questions? Contact wellness@ahs.ca.

Site Champions Sought

Workplace Health and Safety is looking for [site champions](#) for peer-to-peer immunizations ahead of the 2021-2022 flu season. Site champions play a key role in supporting our annual [employee influenza immunization](#) program by improving access to the flu vaccine through on-site immunizations and promoting the importance of getting immunized. If you are interested in participating, contact your [Workplace Health and Safety team member](#).

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 couple recent messages of gratitude with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

I am sending a big thank you from England to the staff in the (University of Alberta Hospital) ICU unit. You have all been caring for my nephew, who has been very ill and still has a long journey ahead. His wife's English family are so thankful for everything you are doing for him. He is very precious to us all.

— Susan Hills

I had my second dose of COVID-19 vaccine today. Unfortunately, I passed out (nerves) and was scared when I woke up. There were two very kind nurses there who held my hands, rubbed my back, and called my mom for me. They took care of me and assured me the entire time and then walked me out. I am so grateful for this.

— Amara Bell

Wrapping Up — We Can Have Fun and Be Vigilant

Slightly more than two weeks have passed since most public health measures in Alberta were dropped. We hope you are all finding ways to rest and relax during this time, or making plans to do so, while still keeping yourselves and your loved ones safe. This means, among other things, making sure you and the people you care for are fully immunized if eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Like us, I'm sure you're heartened by the fact that Alberta's COVID-19 numbers continue to drop, but also cautious and vigilant because we know the virus and its variants of concern are still circulating and still highly transmissible. So please: Have fun. Rest and recharge. But also stay safe, get fully vaccinated if eligible, encourage others to do so, and please adhere to our PPE and masking directives, as well as our Fit For Work screening, in our workplaces. Let's have fun, play hard, enjoy some down time — and also stay safe.

Watch for our next AHS Update on July 30.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health