



Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

AHS Update: Deadline to submit proof of immunization extended; please stay home if you're sick

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.

Deadline to Submit Proof of Immunization Extended



We are grateful to all who have already submitted their proof of immunization.

Extended: Submit Your COVID-19 Immunization Status by **November 15.**

AHS is pleased to announce that 94 per cent of AHS full-time and part-time employees, 94 per cent of AHS physicians and more than 97 per cent of ICU staff have submitted proof of having been fully immunized. We are grateful to all who have already submitted their proof of immunization and continue to go above and beyond to keep each other and our patients safe.

We appreciate the pressures our teams face in this fourth wave, especially those on the frontlines, and we want to provide every opportunity for our workers, including our contracted service and continuing care providers, to submit their proof of immunization. Based on the current risks, especially for our continuing care settings, and the need to develop mitigation plans for contracted providers, we recognized that more time was needed to ensure we continue to look out for our workers and those in our care.

Giving these considerations, we are extending the deadline to comply with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#) until **Nov. 30, 2021**. This extension applies to all AHS, Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL), Carewest, CapitalCare and Covenant Health employees, medical and midwifery staff, students, volunteers and contracted healthcare providers. Workers will need to provide proof of immunization no later than **Nov. 15, 2021** by submitting the [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#) after their final dose. Those workers who are not fully immunized will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence until they can provide proof of immunization, except where a workplace accommodation is approved.

To date, AHS has received approximately 1,400 requests for accommodation on

medical or religious grounds, with about 875 having submitted the required paperwork. Those requiring a medical, religious, or other form of accommodation had until Oct. 16, 2021 to submit their request. AHS continues to process and review accommodation requests submitted. Should the need for an accommodation arise in the future, AHS will review those requests as per our accommodation policy.

We encourage staff who remain unimmunized to address any concerns they may have with their leader or healthcare provider and get their immunization as soon as possible. COVID-19 immunization appointments can be booked through ahs.ca/vaccine. Appointments can also be booked through the Government of Alberta's new [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#).

There are many supports and resources on [Insite](#). You can also find additional information in the [staff FAQ](#). Contact AHSVaccineTaskForce@ahs.ca if you have further questions. Thank for you for your ongoing support in helping us maintain a work environment that promotes the safety and well-being of our workers, patients, clients and residents.

COVID-19 Status

ICU Capacity Update

AHS continues to do all it can to ensure we have enough ICU capacity to meet patient demand.

With pressure easing slightly on our ICUs, we are reducing the available surge beds so we can redeploy staff back to caring for patients who need surgeries and procedures completed.

We will ensure we maintain ICU capacity above daily demand to a planned maximum of 380 beds as long as staff and physician availability allows, and will readjust our plans as needed if COVID-19 cases rise again.

We currently have 348 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 175 additional spaces (more than twice our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds). This is 28 fewer surge ICU spaces than the peak of 376.

There are currently 277 patients in ICU, about two thirds of whom are COVID-19 positive.

Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 80 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 160 per cent.

- In Calgary Zone, we currently have 128 ICU beds, including 62 additional spaces. Calgary Zone ICU is operating at 69 per cent of current capacity.

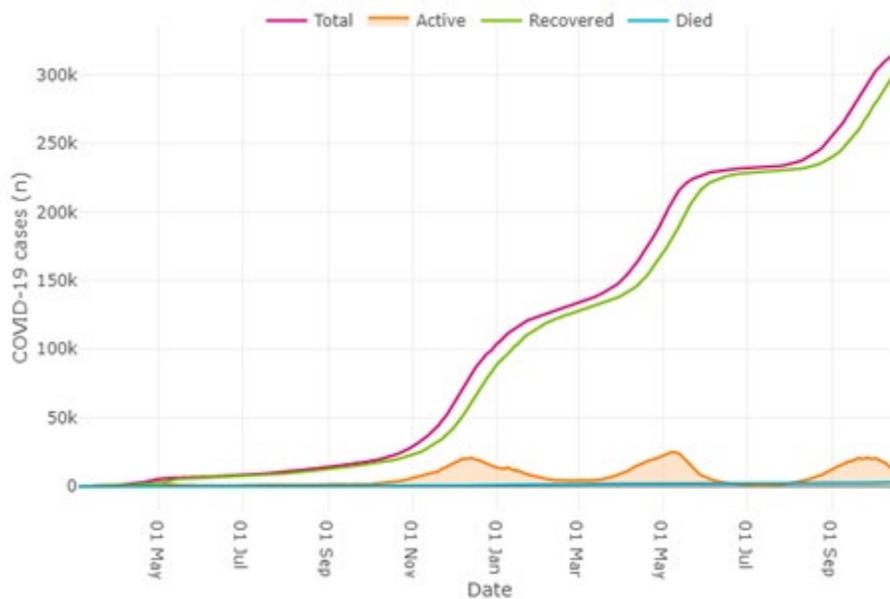
- In Edmonton Zone, we currently have 143 ICU beds, including 71 additional spaces. Edmonton Zone is operating at 90 per cent of current capacity.
- In Central Zone, we currently have 24 ICU beds, including 12 additional spaces. Central Zone ICU is operating at 79 per cent of current capacity.
- In South Zone, we currently have 36 ICU beds, including 19 additional ICU spaces. South Zone ICU is currently operating at 78 per cent capacity.
- In North Zone, we have 17 ICU spaces (split between Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray), including 11 additional ICU spaces. North Zone is currently operating at 76 per cent capacity).

As of Oct. 21, 3,026 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 84 deaths over the past week. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.

New and Active Cases

As of Oct. 21, there were 10,037 active cases in Alberta, a 22.7 per cent decrease compared to October 15 when there were 12,978 cases.

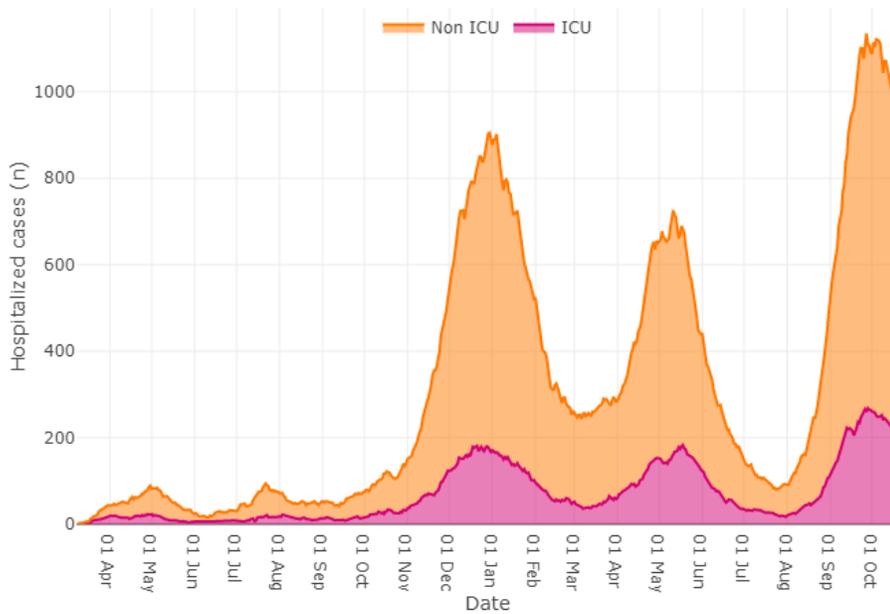
For the seven-day period ending Oct. 20, there was an average of 764 new daily cases of COVID-19, compared to 887 for the previous week (Oct. 7 to Oct. 13), a 13.9 per cent decrease. For the second week in a row, all zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from a 4.5 per cent decrease in the North Zone to a 23.4 per cent decrease in the Central Zone. Over the past week, the Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 1,299 (an average of 186 cases per day), compared to 1,574 new cases the previous week (an average of 225 cases per day).



Hospitalizations

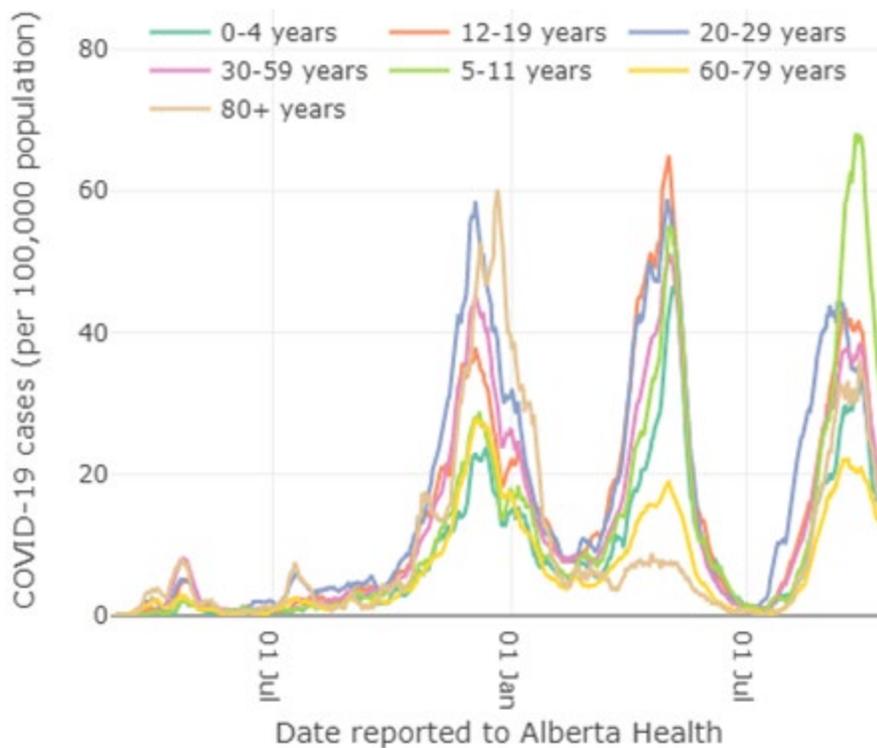
A total of 711 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19 on October 20,

compared to 806 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on October 13, an 11.8 per cent decrease.



Cases by Age Group

As of Oct.17, children ages five to 11 – who are currently ineligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine – had the highest seven-day rolling average of new daily COVID-19 cases, with 29 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans ages 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 18 cases per 100,000 people. All age groups reported a decreased rate of COVID-19 cases compared to the previous report. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are in the figure below.



Variants of Concern

For variants of concern, the lab is still using targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From October 12 to October 18, 53 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed, on average. Of those strain-typed, the rolling average was 99.6 per cent Delta variant. The remaining 0.4 per cent were a wild variant. Strain-typing takes a number of days and these numbers may change as lab data becomes available.

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- As of October 20, a total of 318,520 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 14,010 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.4 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 305,075 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19. In this case, recovered means they are no longer considered contagious. The number of Albertans who have recovered from COVID-19 reported here, does not reflect the recovery time from a COVID-19 infection, which could last well beyond the time in which people are considered contagious.
- From October 14 to October 20, 76,351 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 10,907 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity rate ranged from 6.53 per cent to 8.59 per cent. As of October 20, a total of 5,780,619 tests have been conducted and 2,496,431 individuals have ever 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 R value is updated every two weeks. From October 11 to October 17 the province-wide R value was 0.85 and the previously reported value was 0.92.

- Public reporting of [COVID-19 cases in schools](#) continues, which includes the name of each school with at least two COVID-19 cases.

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 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 October 18:

- 84,622 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 8,345 (or 9.86 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 6,003 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 654 (or 10.90 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,342 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 5,952 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 341 (or 5.73 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 246 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 21 (or 8.54 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 95 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](#).

COVID-19 Immunization Update

Health Canada reviewing Pfizer submission for vaccine in younger age group

This week, Health Canada received a [submission from Pfizer-BioNTech](#) to authorize use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children five to 11 years of age.

This is the first submission Health Canada has received for the use of a COVID-19 vaccine in this younger age group. Health Canada will only authorize the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine if the independent and thorough scientific review of all the data included in the submission shows that the benefits of the vaccine outweigh the potential risks in this age group. The assessment will include a detailed review of clinical trial results, as well as other evolving data and information about the health impacts of COVID-19 and variants of concern on children in Canada.

Health Canada continues to closely monitor all safety and effectiveness data from the real-world use of the vaccine since its deployment in Canada and internationally, including data in the younger age group where it is authorized for use.

Studies with Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine are ongoing in children less than five years of age, and other manufacturers are also testing their vaccines in children of various age ranges. Health Canada expects to receive data for review in the coming months.

Availability of Janssen vaccine in Alberta

We continue to receive questions about the availability of the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine. The Janssen vaccine is not currently available in Canada.

Alberta is currently in discussions with the National Operations Centre about potentially requesting a small shipment of Janssen vaccine, when safely available.

The other COVID-19 vaccines - Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca / Covishield – continue to be available and are safe and effective. You can book an appointment online at ahs.ca/vaccine, or you can call Health Link at 811, check with your local pharmacy or doctor's office.

You can sign up to be notified when there are vaccine updates and timeline changes from Alberta Health at alberta.ca/vaccine.

Update on additional doses for healthcare workers

We continue to receive questions about third/additional COVID-19 vaccine doses for healthcare workers. No decisions have been made on expanding third doses to healthcare workers.

Alberta Health makes decisions regarding eligibility for vaccines in the province. These decisions are informed by expert advice from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization and the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization. We will continue to keep you updated on Alberta Health decisions in this area.

Current evidence shows two doses of vaccine provides good protection against severe outcomes, for those younger than 75 years in the general population. At this time, additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine are recommended for the following groups:

- Albertans age 75 and older (born in 1946 or before)
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis people age 65 and older (born in 1956 or before)
- Seniors living in congregate care settings
- Immunocompromised individuals 12 years of age and older with specific conditions

Travellers going to jurisdictions where Covishield/AstraZeneca or mixed doses are not recognized may also access additional doses if needed.

Appointments can be booked [online](#) at AHS clinics, participating pharmacies and doctor's office, or by calling Health Link at 811. COVID-19 vaccines are also available

by walk-in at [participating clinics](#) and pharmacies. Individuals aged 65 and older who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve. For more information, go to alberta.ca/vaccine.

Things You Need to Know

Reminder: Please Stay Home When Sick and Stay Vigilant

It is critical that we all continue to take the required precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and other viruses, as we enter into the time of year where we see an increase in cases of respiratory diseases. In addition to being immunized for both COVID-19 and influenza, we cannot overstate the importance of **staying home when sick**.

While influenza and COVID-19 are very different illnesses, several symptoms are the same. Adhering to all [personal protective equipment](#) (PPE) measures, completing your [fit for work screening](#) every day, [washing your hands regularly](#) and [physically distancing](#) can help prevent the spread of both.

Your actions matter and we each have a role to play in protecting each other – our patients, staff, physicians and volunteers. We must all continue to be diligent in modelling safe work practices. For more information, including the Online Fit for Work Screening Tool, visit ahs.ca/fitforwork. Talk to your leader if you have questions about fit for work screening at your site.

Get Fully Protected: Get your Influenza Immunization

Alberta's influenza immunization season kicked off this past Monday, Oct. 18. Influenza vaccine is free of charge, and available to all Albertans six months of age and older.

GET FULLY PROTECTED.

You need both **INFLUENZA** and **COVID-19 VACCINES**.

Don't have your COVID-19 vaccine?

It's safe to get it together with your influenza vaccine.

ahs.ca/vaccine | call 811

Alberta
Government

Alberta Health
Services

AHS public health clinics are offering immunization to those under five years of age and their immediate families or household members. Appointments are required at

AHS clinics. All other Albertans can be immunized at participating pharmacies and doctor's offices.

Don't have your COVID-19 vaccine? Get it at the same time as your flu shot, at select locations. It's safe and recommended.

Book your appointment today at ahs.ca/vaccine. If appointments are not available online in your area, contact your local pharmacy or doctor's office directly to see if they are offering influenza immunization by appointment or walk-in. If you need help booking one or multiple appointments for children and family members, please call Health Link at 811.

Staff, physicians and volunteers can also choose to be immunized through a site champion at their facility, a roving cart at their site or a Workplace Health and Safety drop-in clinic. See [Insite](#) for more on the staff immunization campaign.

Now more than ever, we need to protect each other, our communities and our healthcare system against influenza and COVID-19.

Phased Resumption of Surgical Procedures

Starting Oct. 18, 2021, AHS began implementing an incremental approach to resuming scheduled surgical services.

Resumption is provincial, but decisions are being made locally and on a case-by-case basis. Those who are waiting the longest and are the sickest will be prioritized. Patients will be contacted directly when it is time to receive their surgery.

All surgical expansion plans can be adjusted, as necessary, to help the health system respond to potential increased health system demand caused by COVID-19. Safety of patients, staff and physicians is the utmost priority and increases in surgery activity will happen keeping patient safety and the need to optimize outcomes for all patients top of mind.

We will maintain all current COVID-19 public health orders and infection prevention and control standards and processes, including physical distancing and visitor guidelines, within our facilities.

We are very grateful to our staff and physicians for all the hard work they continue to do.

COVID-19 Guidelines for Eye Protection

Continuous eyewear is an important piece of personal protection as we work through the fourth wave of the pandemic and ensure the health and safety of both our patients and one another.

Provincewide, continuous eye protection **must be maintained for ALL staff and physicians:**

- in COVID-19 units,
- in settings experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks,
- when providing care or services within two metres of a patient with COVID-19, suspected COVID-19 or who is experiencing symptoms consistent with a respiratory tract infection,
- when providing care to patients on [contact and droplet precautions](#), in addition to a medical mask, gloves and gown.

For those who are fully vaccinated, as updated in the eye protection guidelines in May 2021, [eye protection](#) may be discontinued in all other instances.

All AHS healthcare workers must be fully immunized by November 30, 2021. Until then, **healthcare workers who are not yet fully vaccinated must maintain continuous eye protection as part of personal protection.**

Those who are fully vaccinated will not be quarantined following contact with COVID-19, if not wearing eye protection (as long as they remain asymptomatic). Full vaccination is achieved two weeks following completion of a two-dose vaccine series.

Non-vaccinated healthcare workers will require assessment by Workplace Health and Safety following exposure to COVID-19 and may require quarantine if eye protection is not worn.

As always, healthcare workers may choose to use eye protection as directed by their point of care risk assessment, or their assessment of all potential risks and hazards.

As an added precaution, zone and site leadership may choose to mandate continuous eyewear during an outbreak situation, or based on local circumstances, as deemed appropriate.

We thank all staff, and physicians for continuing to follow this guidance, as we continue to provide exemplary care to all Albertans.

For more information about eye protection, visit: [Use and Reuse of Eye Protection during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

Combined Laboratory and X-ray Technologist Week

This week we celebrate our Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists (CLXT) during CLXT Week, which is held the third week of October every year. CLXTs serve our patients when they are most vulnerable, and the work they do is so important to patients, their families and the providers who make treatment decisions, based on results acquired by CLXTs. Not only do they provide quality imaging and lab testing as part of the healthcare team, but they also work as professionals helping patients

through their healthcare journeys with compassion and empathy.

Please join us in thanking our CLXTs for their commitment to quality care and their perseverance during these challenging times. Learn more about this dynamic profession in this [feature story](#) on the Alberta Precision Laboratory website, as we highlight three CLXT employees and share their experiences.

Canadian Patient Safety Week Begins Next Week

From Oct. 25 to Oct. 29, Alberta Health Services is proud to celebrate [Canadian Patient Safety Week \(CPSW\)](#), a national campaign that aims to inspire continuous improvement when it comes to patient safety and quality care.

This year's CPSW theme is Who knows? Essential Care Partners do. Essential Care Partners, also called designated support persons, are more than visitors. They are vital members of the care team who provide consistent support to a loved one throughout their care journey – improving safety, care and the well-being of all involved.

To keep us engaged in this year's CPSW, Healthcare Excellence Canada is offering interactive and exciting activities. These include new resources for healthcare providers and members of the public. You can find tips, tools, and resources on how to welcome and engage Essential Care Partners into health and care settings at [PatientSafetyWeek.ca](#).

Join the CPSW webinar

The 2021 CPSW Webinar will help build an understanding of the importance of Essential Care Partners and discuss some of the lessons learned through the COVID-19 pandemic. This session takes place **Wednesday, October 27, from 10:00 a.m. to 11 a.m.** [Sign up here](#).

Verna's Weekly Video Message: Cybersecurity is Everyone's Responsibility

One of the things I (Verna) am very proud of is how our people strive to live our values, every day. Whether it's treating one another with respect, or ensuring we place safety at the centre of all our decisions.

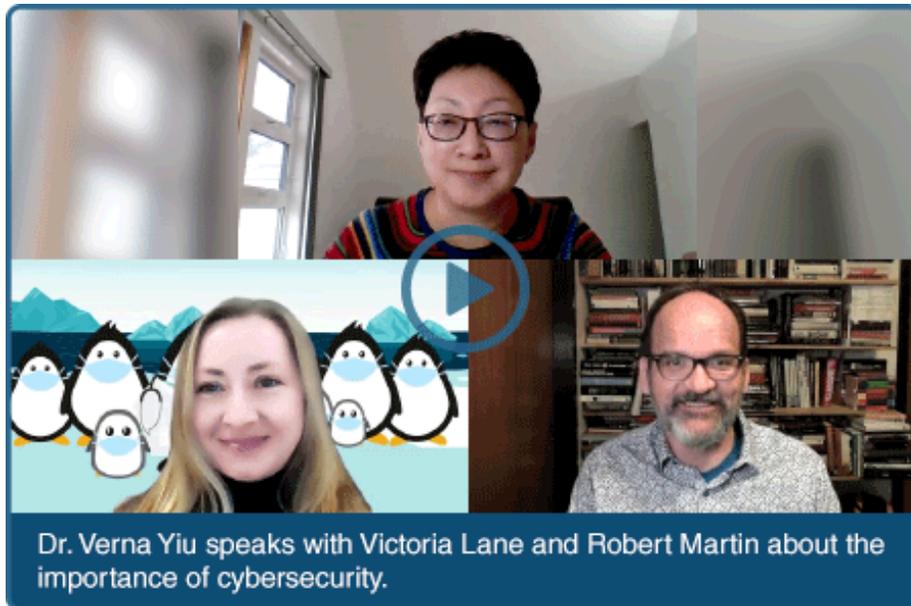
We also value accountability, especially when it comes to protecting the privacy and security of the information we are entrusted to hold. Whether it's personal information, health information, or AHS business information, we must be vigilant about how we use it and ensure we protect it.

We also have to be on the lookout for online scammers trying to trick us into providing them with access to our personal and AHS systems.

Cyber-crime is up by 600 per cent due to the pandemic, so it's more important than ever to understand the threats out there. With October being [Cybersecurity](#)

[Awareness month](#), I thought it would be good to have [members of our InfoCare team on the vlog](#). They can give us a refresher on what we can do to keep ourselves cyber-safe and secure our information and systems. Joining me to tell us more are:

- Robert Martin, Chief Information Security Officer, and
- Victoria Lane, Chief Privacy Officer & Legal Counsel



Remember, you play a critical role in protecting the information we hold and the systems we use. To better understand your privacy and information security obligations, review the concise [Confidentiality & User Agreement Reference Guide](#) and [Code of Conduct](#).

Follow these tips to help protect our information and systems from scammers:

- Use your AHS email for AHS business only
- Use [complex passwords](#) (and keep them confidential)
- Use [multi-factor authentication](#) when logging in remotely
- Watch for AHS' external email warning, so you don't click on links or attachments that could be infected with malware

You can help protect AHS' health, personal and business information by accessing and using the least information needed to perform your direct AHS job duties and responsibilities. If you don't know what information you should access within your role, please speak with your manager.

Practice our ten [InfoCare Behaviors](#) and refresh your skills by taking the MyLearningLink Required Organizational Learning (ROL) module [InfoCare – On Our Best Behaviors](#).

Tell us what you think about Engagement and Patient Experience: Take the Survey by Nov. 10

Please take the time to respond to Alberta Health Services' (AHS) [Engagement and Patient Experience survey](#)

The Engagement and Patient Experience team works to advance the principles and practices of patient- and family-centred care and patient engagement, to help improve the overall patient experience.

They have recently launched a [new survey](#) to better understand people's experiences with, and perceptions of, Engagement and Patient Experience. These results will help the team better understand what people know about and expect from Engagement and Patient Experience, and help as they plan and refine their service delivery model.

Whether you've previously worked with Engagement and Patient Experience or not, the team would be grateful for your feedback. Anyone involved in AHS healthcare services can take part in the survey.

The survey is voluntary and takes about 8 to 12 minutes to complete. It will be open until **end of day, Nov. 10, 2021. All responses are confidential.** For the best user experience on Together 4 Health, please use Microsoft Edge, Chrome or Firefox as your browser.

If you have any questions, please email Patient.Engagement@ahs.ca.

Find the Latest Employee Discounts

The new [Employee Discount webpage](#) features all the special prices and discounts our generous communities and businesses currently offer to our staff and physicians. You'll find discounts on fitness, technology, travel, food and beverages, auto, and more. You can search for discounts by category and location, making it easier for you to find what you are looking for.

Please note that all businesses and facilities require the presentation of valid AHS identification to receive the discount.

If you have questions about the program please email recognition@ahs.ca.

Be Well - Be Kind

Exploring the Pandemic Experience through Art

A powerful art exhibit is on display, featuring the work of University of Alberta Hospital healthcare workers in a unique project known as Photovoice. Staff and physicians were asked to take photographs and write a narrative to accompany them, expressing their unique experiences in the COVID-19 pandemic. From there, Artists on the Wards, from the Friends of the University Hospitals, transformed the submitted photography and narratives into an artistic presentation, called [Photovoice](#)

[- Looking Through the COVID-19 Lens: Exploring the Lived Experiences Within Healthcare.](#)

The project allowed healthcare workers to use imagery to reveal their lived experiences. The project team hopes to gain a better understanding of the struggles and experiences faced by healthcare workers during this unusual time, to find ways to better support them. [Learn more about this powerful, artistic collaboration.](#)

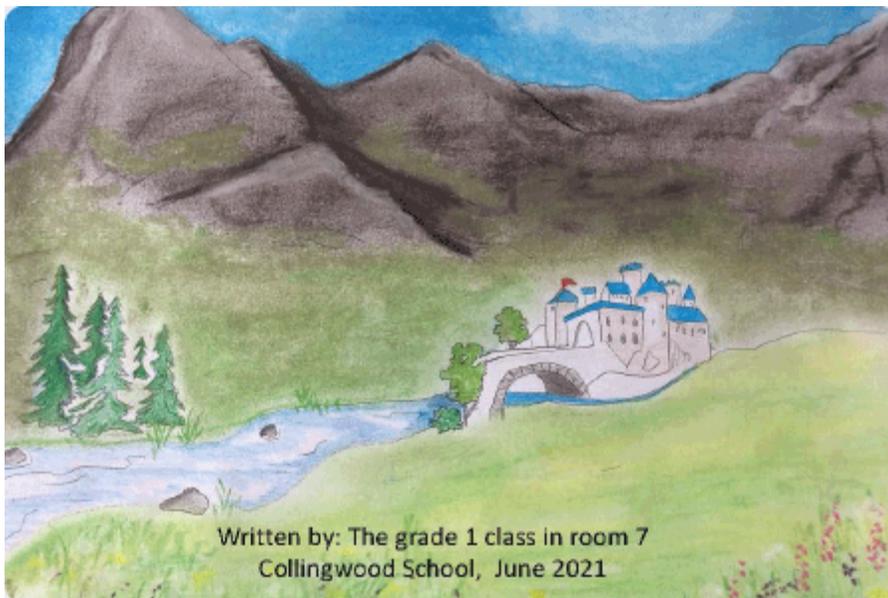
Gratitude from Albertans

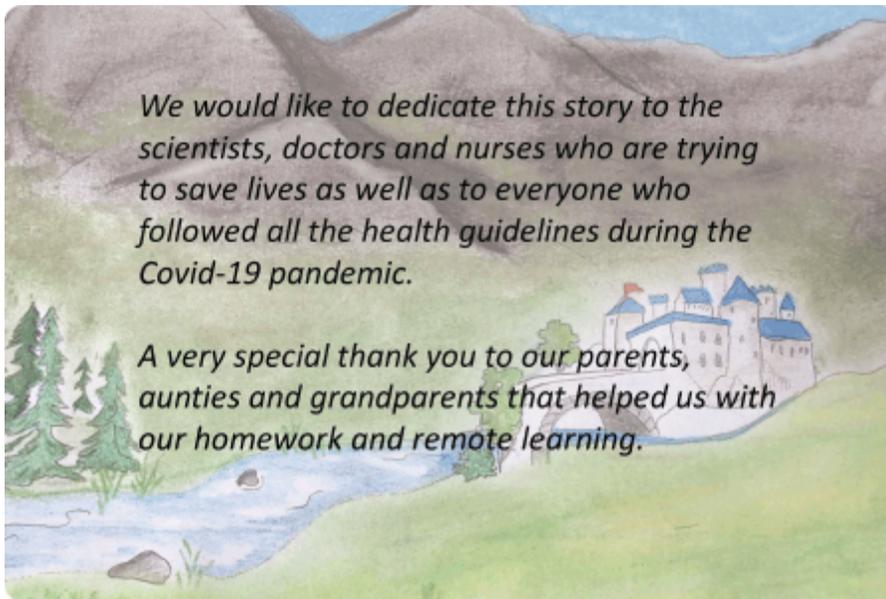
Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to all Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep coming in from across the province and beyond, during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share some recent messages of gratitude with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

The Hydra and the Strike of Lightning

The Grade 1 class at Calgary's Collingwood Elementary School wrote and illustrated a story to thank all the scientists, doctors, nurses and everyone at AHS for their hard work during the pandemic. Thanks, Collingwood Elementary!

The Hydra and the Strike of Lightning





We would like to dedicate this story to the scientists, doctors and nurses who are trying to save lives as well as to everyone who followed all the health guidelines during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A very special thank you to our parents, aunts and grandparents that helped us with our homework and remote learning.

You have always been and will always be true heroes. I thank you for all your selfless hours. You are appreciated more than you know.

—Anonymous

Thank you. Thank you. THANK YOU. I want you to know that I appreciate what you are doing, most of it I'll never fully comprehend, to help our people. I'm sorry you have to go through this awful time, and I hope you know that there are countless Albertans beside and behind you that think you are heroes. Your sacrifices are not lost on me. I wish you rest, respite, and time with the people you love. I hope you don't have to keep fighting much longer, but know that you have many allies with you. Sending you love.

—Anonymous

From the bottom of my heart and from my family, I want to salute your hard work which can never be overlooked...we wouldn't survive without your work today or tomorrow! Keep up the great work...and remember we appreciate you anytime we talk about COVID-19.

—Balvir

Wrapping Up – The Power Of Simple Changes

We experienced another positive week as pressures on our system have eased again ever so slightly. This is great news and continues to give us hope during this crushing wave of the pandemic. These incremental improvements speak to the power of health restrictions and immunizations. Simple changes to our interactions through hand-washing, using masks and other PPE, distancing and getting vaccinated can make a measureable difference. On that note, we want to extend our deep appreciation and congratulations to teams across AHS for your exceptional response to getting your COVID-19 immunizations. If you haven't yet, please submit your proof of immunization. You have demonstrated your broad support for the immunization

policy and your recognition that through immunization, we can protect ourselves, each other and those in our care.

While we know the numbers are trending in a positive direction, we don't want to minimize the fact that we still have enormous pressures on our hospitals and in particular, our ICUs and critical care areas. We appreciate the work you are all doing to care for the Albertans who need us most and the heavy demands that continue to be a day-to-day reality in our system. We can help by getting influenza immunizations and not adding seasonal illness to the current pressures: as the reminder noted above, colds and flus are circulating, so please, stay home when you're sick.

Thank you for another week of providing exceptional care in exceptional circumstances.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health



Healthy Albertans.
Healthy Communities.
Together.



