



Message from
Dr. Verna Yiu &
Dr. Laura McDougall

AHS Update: Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) vaccine arrives in Alberta, Nov.15 final deadline to submit proof of Immunization

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

Today's Update

- Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) vaccine arrives in Alberta
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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.

Janssen (Johnson and Johnson) vaccine arrives in Alberta

As announced by Alberta Health today, starting today, Albertans 18 and older can book appointments to receive the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine by calling Health

Link at 811. Due to limited supply, the Janssen vaccine will only be administered at AHS clinics in select locations across the province.

At this time, only one dose of the Janssen vaccine is needed to be fully immunized.

Healthcare workers who get one dose and submit their proof of immunization by Nov. 15 will be considered compliant with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#). (See more on the deadline in an item below.)

Albertans who choose the Janssen vaccine are eligible for a booster dose of an mRNA vaccine at least six months after receiving their first dose. For more information, or to see the full announcement, see the [news release](#) on the Alberta Health website

Supports When You Need Them

Access EFAP supports online

Sign up for [Homeweb](#) to access online [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) supports for your mental health and well-being. By creating a profile, you will have personalized content and resource recommendations, including e-courses, articles, counselling and expert support at any time. Sign up with your email and select the company name (AHS or APL). Homeweb and other EFAP supports are available to you and your immediate family.

For immediate personal support, call the EFAP intake line anytime at 1-877-273-3134. Remember, it is confidential and available 24/7.

For physicians, contact the [AMA Physician and Family Support Program](#), also a confidential 24/7 support line, at 1-877-SOS-4MDS for options and support.

There are many ways we can support you through these challenging times, no matter your situation. Download the [Resilience app](#) to learn skills to build your mental health. See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports. Questions? Contact wellness@ahs.ca.

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 to caring for non-COVID-19 patients who need surgeries and procedures.

We will 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 275 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 102 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds.

As of 10 a.m. this morning, there were currently 214 patients in ICU, about half of whom are COVID-19 positive.

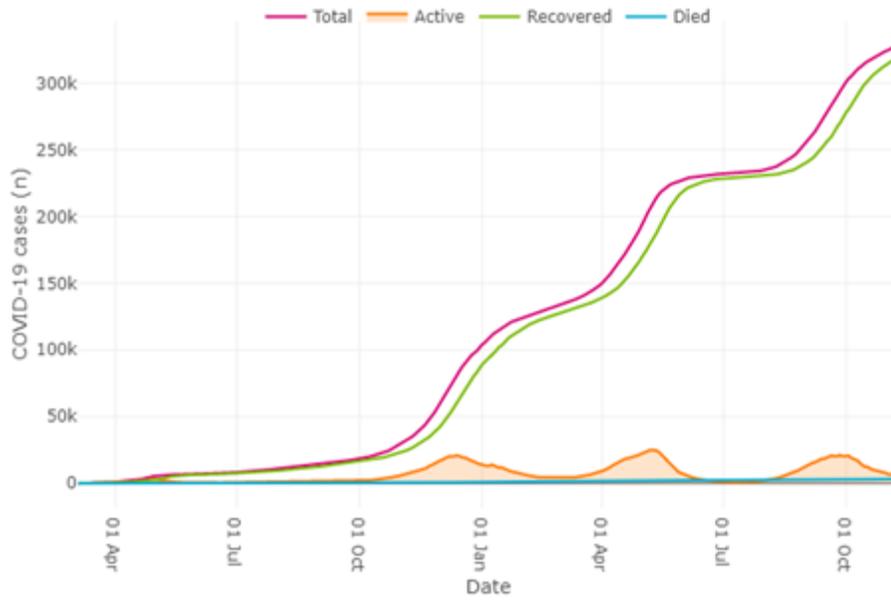
Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is at 78 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 124 per cent.

- In Calgary Zone, we currently have 100 ICU beds, including 34 additional spaces. Calgary Zone ICU is operating at 65 per cent of current capacity (including 21 COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In Edmonton Zone, we currently have 114 ICU beds, including 42 additional spaces. Edmonton Zone is operating at 87 per cent of current capacity (including 53 COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In Central Zone, we currently have 20 ICU beds, including eight additional spaces. Central Zone ICU is operating at 85 per cent of current capacity (including nine COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In South Zone, we currently have 28 ICU beds, including 11 additional ICU spaces. South Zone ICU is currently operating at 86 per cent capacity (including 18 COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In North Zone, we have 13 ICU spaces (split between Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray), including seven additional ICU spaces. North Zone is currently operating at 69 per cent capacity (including six COVID-19 patients in ICU).

New and Active Cases

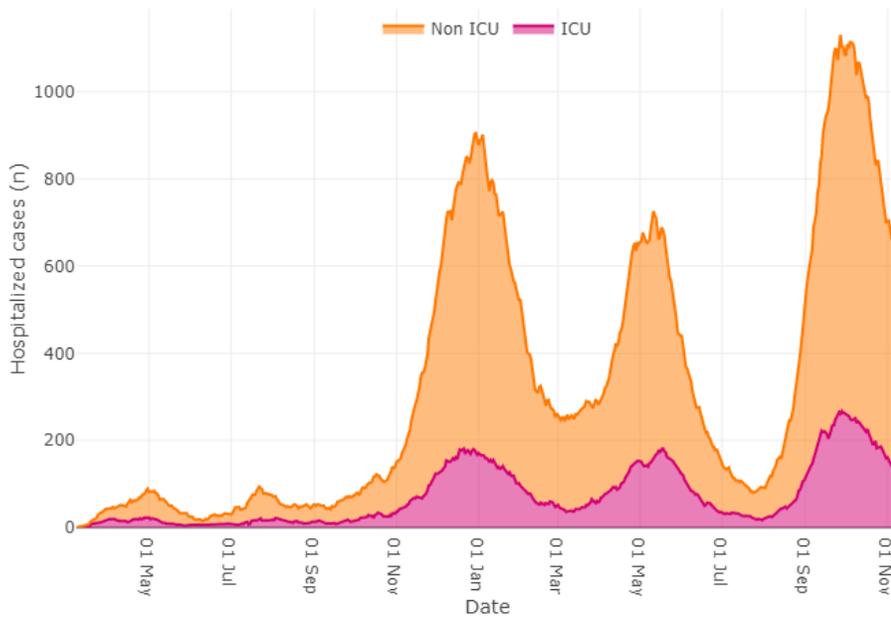
As of Nov. 9, there was an average of 452 new cases of COVID-19 per day, compared to 454 cases per day the previous week (Oct. 28 to Nov. 3). Four out of five zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from a 1.03 per cent decrease in the Edmonton Zone to a 13.6 per cent decrease in both the South and Central zones. Over the past six days, the Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 858 (a six-day average of 143 cases per day), compared to 854 new cases the previous week (a seven-day average of 122 cases per day).

As of Nov. 11, there are 5,745 active cases in Alberta, an 11.8 per cent decrease compared to Nov. 3. Most zones reported a decrease in active cases. For the sixth consecutive week, the Calgary Zone reported the most active cases with 1,777, and was the only zone that did not report a decrease in cases compared to last week.



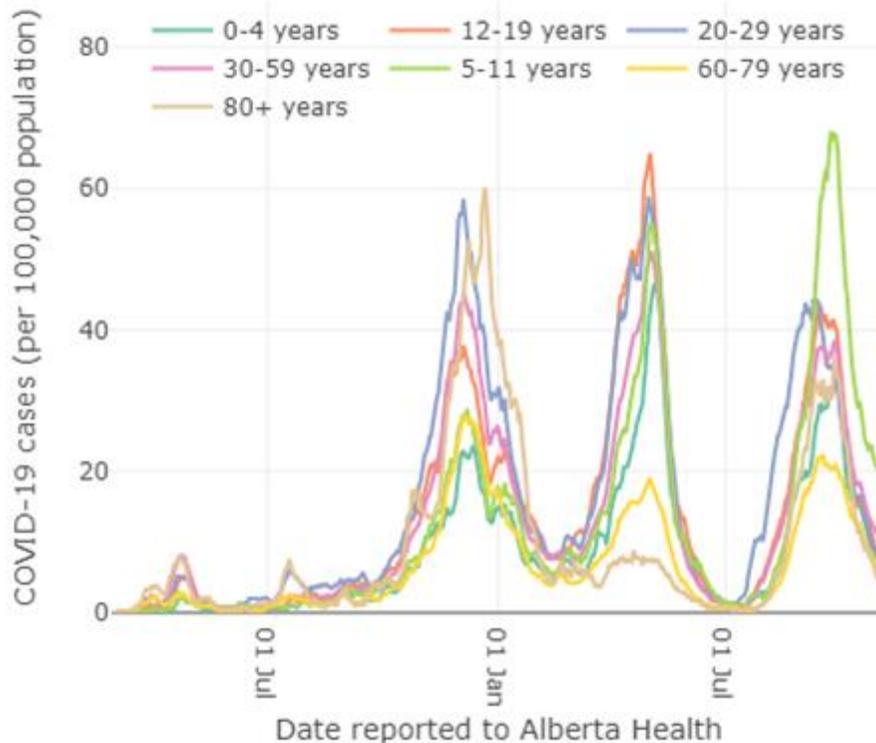
Hospitalizations

On Nov. 9, 459 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19, compared to 540 on Nov. 3; a 15.0 per cent decrease.



Cases by Age Group

As of Nov. 6, 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 25.6 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans ages 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 10.7 cases per 100,000 people. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are shown below.



Variants of Concern

For variants of concern, the lab is utilizing targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From Nov. 1 to Nov. 7, the average percent of positive samples that were strain-typed was 46 per cent. 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 Nov. 9, a total of 328,189 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 14,634 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.5 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 319,017 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19, meaning they are no longer considered contagious.
- From Nov. 4 to Nov. 9, 56,995 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 9,499 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 4.21 per cent to 5.28 per cent. As of Nov. 9, a total of 5.9 million tests have been conducted and 2.5 million individuals have been tested.
- As of Nov. 9, 3,164 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 27 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.
- 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 Oct. 25 to Oct. 31 the

provincewide R value was 0.87 and the previously reported value was 0.85. Alberta Health did not update the R value this week.

- Public reporting of schools continues and you can find more information, [here](#).

Things You Need to Know

Nov. 15 is the Final Deadline to Submit Proof of Immunization



If you are fully immunized, now is the time to submit your [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#). Employees are reminded that they have until **Nov. 15** to submit their proof of immunization for COVID-19. All employees, medical and midwifery staff, students, volunteers and contracted healthcare providers must be fully immunized by **Nov. 30** to comply with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#).

If you have challenges submitting the online form, contact Workplace Health and Safety at COVID19Immunization@ahs.ca. As a reminder, a booster shot is not required to be considered fully immunized for the purpose of this policy, which is aligned with Alberta Health's guidance at this time. You do not need to re-submit the online form after receiving a booster.

Except where a workplace accommodation is approved, those employees who are not fully immunized by Nov. 30 will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence, effective Dec. 1, including those who are non-compliant and work remotely.

The accommodation team is working hard to review all files and respond to requests as quickly as possible. Each request has to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and when a decision is reached, both the employee and manager will be notified.

See the latest [staff FAQ](#) for more information. Additional supports and resources can be found on [Insite](#).

COVID-19 Immunization Update

Other vaccine availability

- **AstraZeneca** - Currently, there is no supply of AstraZeneca in the province but supply is expected later this year. More information will be available at that time.
- **Novavax** - [Novavax Inc.](#) announced the completion of its rolling submission to Health Canada for the authorization of its COVID-19 vaccine, on Nov. 1. Novavax says the filing marks the first protein-based COVID-19 vaccine submission for authorization to

regulatory authorities in Canada.

Health Canada is responsible for reviewing and approving vaccines for use in Canada, and for the distribution of vaccines to the provinces. Alberta Health is responsible for provincial vaccine policy setting, vaccine allocation and determining eligibility criteria. To learn more about the vaccine review process, the vaccines currently approved for use in Canada, and the status of vaccines currently under review, visit: [Vaccines and treatments for COVID-19: Progress](#).

Third doses for eligible populations, including healthcare workers

Third doses of COVID-19 vaccine are now available to additional Albertans, including:

- Frontline healthcare workers who provide direct patient care and who had their first two doses of vaccine less than eight weeks apart.
- Adults 18 years of age and older who received two doses of the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine, or one dose of the Janssen vaccine, who have not already received a dose of an mRNA vaccine and are not eligible under other booster dose criteria.
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) adults 18 years of age and older, regardless of where they live.
- Adults aged 70 and older.

These individuals are eligible for a third dose at least six months after their primary series.

At this time, as mentioned above and per Alberta Health's guidance, the booster dose is not required to be considered fully immunized for the purpose of the AHS' Immunization of Workers for COVID 19 Policy.

Healthcare workers will not be contacted by AHS if/when they are eligible to receive an additional dose. Please book your own appointment if/when you are eligible.

In addition to the groups listed above, those previously eligible for an additional dose continue to be eligible. For a full list, visit alberta.ca/vaccine.

Booking is based on the honour system and appointments can be made through the [online booking tool](#), at 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 who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve.

At this time, booster doses are not recommended or available for the general population. Vaccines continue to provide strong protection against severe outcomes for the general population. Alberta Health will continue to monitor data and expert advice in this area.

Paid leave for healthcare workers for booster doses

Healthcare workers who are eligible to receive an additional dose and who have their vaccine appointment scheduled during a work shift are eligible for up to three consecutive hours of paid leave. This includes all AHS employees who are full-time, part-time or casual. This does not apply to vaccine appointments that occur off work time.

AHS strongly encourages eligible healthcare workers to get their additional dose as soon as they are able. Employees and managers should work together when scheduling COVID-19 vaccination leaves. Employees are required to give their leader as much notice as possible before taking their leave.

The Government of Alberta introduced [job-protected paid leave](#) on April 21 to allow Albertans to access their COVID-19 vaccine. Information on time coding for vaccine appointments can be found on the [Time Management Resources](#) page on Insite.

[Pfizer vaccine for younger age group continues to be reviewed by Health Canada](#)

Health Canada continues to review a submission from Pfizer-BioNTech to authorize use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children five to 11 years of age. The vaccine will only be authorized for use if the independent scientific review of the submission shows the benefits outweigh potential risks in this age group. The assessment will include a review of evolving information about the health impacts of COVID-19 and variants of concern on children in Canada.

As we await approval from Health Canada and decisions from Alberta Health, we are preparing our teams, as well as updating our policies, processes and resources, so AHS can support vaccine rollout in a child- and family-friendly manner. We will also ensure Alberta families have the relevant information they need to inform their decision about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

[No evidence for increase in miscarriages or stillbirths after COVID-19 immunization](#)

The COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective for those who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant and those who have recently given birth.

As Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Deena Hinshaw said on [Nov. 9](#), there is no evidence miscarriages or stillbirths have increased after COVID-19 vaccines have been made available. Evidence shows there has actually been a slight, but steady reduction in the number of miscarriages in Alberta starting in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and has continued over the following two years.

COVID-19 infection in pregnancy is a risk to both parent and child, and being fully immunized can help protect pregnant individuals from severe outcomes from the virus.

Health Canada and Alberta Health continually monitor information on adverse reactions to ensure vaccine programs are safe and effective.

We encourage anyone who is hesitant about getting immunized to seek out trusted, expert sources for information. This includes talking with your healthcare provider, calling Health Link at 811 to speak with a registered nurse, and exploring resources available:

- [Vaccines, pregnancy and fertility telephone town hall Oct. 27](#)
- For healthcare providers: [Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy – Applying the PrOTCT Framework to Conversations with Patients](#)
- [Vaccine myths and facts](#)
- ahs.ca/vaccinepregnancy

Travel and COVID-19 immunization

As of Nov. 8, the U.S. has reopened its borders to fully immunized travellers and individuals immunized with [any combination of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine \(or a single dose of Janssen\)](#) authorized by U.S. regulators or the World Health Organization – including AstraZeneca.

New Canadian federal vaccine requirements to board a flight, train or ship were implemented at the end of October. From Oct. 30 to Nov. 29, there is a short transition period when travellers who don't yet qualify as fully vaccinated will be able to travel if they can show a valid COVID-19 molecular test taken within 72 hours of travel. More information is available at [COVID-19 Boarding flights and trains in Canada](#).

The Government of Canada is engaging with Indigenous peoples, provinces and territories to ensure travellers from remote communities, who are not fully vaccinated, are still able to travel for any reason. More information is available here: [Proof of vaccination for Indigenous peoples and Northerners in remote communities](#).

Outpatient Monoclonal Antibody Treatment for COVID-19

AHS has begun administering a new monoclonal antibody treatment recently approved by Health Canada to some COVID-19 patients.

Sotrovimab is a new drug developed to treat COVID-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms. It is the first treatment offered to outpatients in Alberta and is administered by intravenous infusion within five days of symptom onset.

In Phase 1 of the AHS rollout, treatment will focus on COVID-19 patients who are either:

- 65 years of age or older and have not received any doses of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Solid organ transplant patients or stem cell transplant patients, regardless of vaccination status.

Patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 and whose symptoms began less than four days ago can call 1-844-343-0971 to find out if they qualify to receive Sotrovimab.

In the first phase, [EMS Mobile Integrated Health \(MIH\)](#) will administer Sotrovimab by IV infusion in patients' homes or continuing care sites. In Fort McMurray, administration will occur at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre. Patients will receive the IV infusion treatment over one hour, and will be observed for another hour post-treatment. A healthcare provider will conduct follow-up assessment within five days of receiving the treatment.

AHS is working to expand access to this treatment in more areas of the province, as quickly as possible. The program will be evolving over the next couple of weeks.

Sotrovimab is not a replacement for the COVID-19 vaccination. Albertans are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This is a treatment available to those who are at a higher risk of worsening symptoms from the disease, and who may require hospitalization.

For more information about Sotrovimab, please visit ahs.ca/covidopt.

COVID-19 Vaccine Records with QR Code Required for R.E.P. Nov. 15

Beginning Monday, Nov. 15, COVID-19 vaccine records must include a [QR code](#) in order for Albertans to enter any business or venue taking part in the [Restrictions Exemption Program](#).

Vaccine records without a QR code, including the paper immunization record received at your appointment, will no longer be accepted, with the exception of First Nations and military vaccine documents.

Businesses will use the [AB COVID-19 Records Verifier app](#) to scan your QR code. When scanned, it displays your name, birthdate and vaccination status. It is not connected to other personal info.

If you received your vaccine at an AHS clinic, pharmacy or physician office in Alberta, visit [alberta.ca/CovidRecords](#) to get your record with a QR code. Save it to your phone or download it and print it off. If you need assistance accessing or printing your record, visit a [participating registry office](#) where they can print it off for you, or call Health Link at 811 to have your record mailed to you.

If you were recently immunized, it may take up to two weeks for your online records to be updated with the latest dose. If it has been longer than that and there is a dose missing, or there are other issues with your record, visit [alberta.ca/CovidRecordsHelp](#) for assistance.

Influenza Immunization Update

As of Nov. 6, 916,184 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered across the province, and three cases of influenza have been confirmed so far this season.

Interactive aggregate data on seasonal influenza is now available online at [Alberta influenza statistics](#).

Although the influenza activity we are seeing right now is less than we would see in a typical season, with changes to public health restrictions and more people travelling, we expect to see influenza and other respiratory viruses circulate in our communities this year.

Now more than ever, we need Albertans to get immunized against influenza to protect themselves, their families and community. Our healthcare system has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. By keeping the number of influenza cases and outbreaks low, we can protect at-risk Albertans, and reduce the pressure on our healthcare system.

[Influenza immunization information for staff, physicians and volunteers](#)

Staff, physicians and volunteers can choose to be immunized through a site champion at their facility or a roving cart at their site.

Immunization appointments are available at some sites. Book your appointment using the [AHS Influenza Immunization booking tool](#) or call Health Link at 811. See [Insite](#) for more on the staff immunization campaign.

Pressure Injury Prevention Webinars Next Week

A pressure injury is damage to the skin and skin tissue from unrelieved pressure. All patients are at risk of a pressure injury, and COVID-19 has further demonstrated the importance of managing this issue to improve patient care.

To learn more about pressure injury prevention, we encourage you to attend the [upcoming webinars](#) from Nov. 17 to Nov. 19.

Approximately one-in-six patients in Alberta hospitals have a pressure injury, and the majority occur in hospital. Patients who acquire pressure injuries experience a significantly longer stay in hospital.

Nov. 18 is [World Wide Pressure Injury Prevention Day](#) and we encourage you to wear red on this day to raise awareness about pressure injury prevention.

Verna's Weekly Video Message: A Look Back and a Look Forward with Nancy Guebert

It has been more than 20 months since the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Alberta.

Some days, it feels like time has passed in the blink of an eye. Then there are those days when we acutely feel every challenge, big or small, and the collective effort it has taken us to get through this pandemic. But, every step of the way, you have persevered and shown remarkable dedication. Some of you have even come back from retirement to lend a hand.

One of those people is Nancy Guebert, who has held numerous leadership roles in her healthcare career. When I (Verna) called Nancy in the spring of 2020 to see if she was interested in “un-retiring” to join the Emergency Co-ordination Centre as director, she didn't hesitate.

As Nancy is re-retiring this week. I thought this was a good opportunity to sit down with her for a bit of a [look back and to talk about what lies ahead](#).



New Staff Wellness Space Supported by Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation

Over the course of the pandemic, our foundation partners have continuously stepped up to show their support for our patients and staff. As the COVID-19 pandemic wears on, their gestures of kindness continue to be critically important as we care for our patients, ourselves and each other.

Keeping this in mind, the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation recently approached their donors to support staff wellness at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. The response to the foundation's request was overwhelming and resulted in approximately \$300,000 in donations.

Thanks to this funding, the Royal Alexandra Hospital now has a new temporary rest area where healthcare providers can go to gain calm, quiet and solitude. In addition to this new space, site leadership is exploring other initiatives to promote staff well-being and to recognize the hard work their teams have contributed throughout the pandemic.

Thank you to the Royal Alexandra Hospital Foundation and their donors for this remarkable gift. We are grateful for all they have done, and continue to do, for our patients and healthcare workers.



Be Well - Be Kind

Calgary Teen Hosts Free Virtual Concert for Healing and Hope

Fourteen-year-old, Kaiya Gamble, is an emerging singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist recognized for her positivity, philanthropic spirit and empowering messages. She has a unique perspective on the pandemic: her mother is an emergency department physician and her father is a helicopter pilot with STARS Air Ambulance.

Watching her parents work on the frontline for more than a year compelled her to express her gratitude to healthcare workers, and offer support to patients, families and everyone affected by COVID-19, by hosting a free benefit concert in May 2021.

The performance, [Kaiya Live](#), was postponed due to public health restrictions, but has since been recorded and is streaming on her YouTube page on Saturday, Nov. 20, at 7 p.m. She is joined by band members of Canadian Country Music Association and Juno Award-winning country artist Brett Kissel, along with special performances by Lenka and Edo Kahn.

Tune in to share in the joy this talented young Albertan seeks to spread around the world.



Gratitude from Albertans

Albertans notice what you are doing every day to provide safe, quality care across the province. Messages of gratitude keep coming in to let us know how appreciated you are – we shared some of those below. To see more of these encouraging submissions, please visit our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

Thank you for the excellent care when my surgery was moved from Red Deer to Olds. Every effort for comfort was carried out and I appreciated the warmth of the blankets, the fuzzy socks and the good snack after the recovery.

—Shannon Glover

Thank you all for being so welcoming and supportive of us MacEwan nursing students. I appreciate all of the learning experiences (e.g., wound care, nursing, physio, etc.) I got to take part in and for the experience to work within such a cohesive team environment. Keep being amazing!

— Anonymous

Thank you so much for taking the time and having enough patience to teach students through such a difficult time. Truly makes me appreciate this profession so much more

than I did to begin with. You all are so resilient and I hope to embody the same strength you have when I become a nurse!

— Anonymous

I would like to express my gratitude to all the nurse practitioners in the organization providing exemplary care to patients and families every day. I am honoured to be a part of such an amazing, caring and compassionate group of individuals who excel in the care that they deliver to a variety of different populations in diverse clinical settings. Take this opportunity to celebrate your achievements, and those of your colleagues. Happy Nurse Practitioners' Week!

— Kim S.

Wrapping Up – Remembering with Gratitude

This week, we want to pay tribute to our veterans and those serving in Canada's Armed Forces, recognizing the two Remembrance Days, which fell over the past few days. Indigenous Veterans Day is observed each year on Nov. 8, as a national day for recognition and remembrance of more than 200 years of military service by First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities. The other national Remembrance Day, which took place yesterday on Nov. 11, also honours those who have served Canada in times of war, military conflict and peace.

We are ever grateful for the sacrifices made to preserve our freedoms, including the privilege of the high-quality healthcare afforded in this country. In turn, we are thankful to be able to serve and protect Albertans every day through the healthcare we deliver.

We appreciate your incredible work again this week. It has been no small feat to re-focus efforts across the province, to provide much-needed surgeries and procedures, which were delayed by COVID-19 pressures. Thank you to those who have pivoted between pandemic roles and other operational roles, to provide care wherever and whenever it has been required.

We continue to be encouraged by the shrinking COVID-19 hospitalization and ICU rates and the relief that brings for our teams of staff and physicians, and the system as a whole. Whether you are on the front lines or supporting Albertans from a little further back, we humbly thank you. Keep hanging in there.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Dr. Verna Yiu

AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

