



Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

Province Updates COVID-19 Public Health Measures

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

As [announced by Alberta Health](#) today, many of our province's COVID-19 restrictions, including the Restriction Exemption Program, public masking, and gathering limits, will be reduced and rescinded in the coming days and weeks, as part of the government's three-step plan for easing COVID-19 public health measures and moving the pandemic response into an endemic phase.

As the science on COVID-19 has evolved, we know the virus will likely continue to circulate in Alberta, and around the globe. AHS will continue to keep the health and well-being of our patients, families, staff, physicians, volunteers, and all Albertans at the forefront of everything we do.

Many of our frontline teams will have questions about how today's announcement may affect them, and what current guidelines and restrictions will remain in place for AHS and Covenant Health.

Continuous masking at all AHS and Covenant sites

Alberta Health Services will continue to require masking in all AHS and Covenant sites provincewide.

This decision has been made to protect those needing care and services in our sites as well as healthcare workers.

Patients seeking or receiving care are more vulnerable than the general population and outbreaks in these settings have a serious impact on patient outcomes and our ability to deliver services. This step is an additional safeguard to protect both patients and healthcare workers.

Continuous masking for staff, physicians, volunteers, designated support persons and

visitors provincewide will remain in place at all acute care, continuing care and community sites, as well as in corporate and warehouse-type settings. Patients in their rooms are not asked to wear masks.

This applies to all facilities including hospitals, continuing care and congregate living sites, as well as community settings such as immunization clinics and home care.

More information on masking can be found on our website: [AHS Guidelines for Continuous Masking](#)

For staff and physicians, there are **no changes at this time** to the [existing PPE policies](#).

Work restrictions

Work restrictions will also continue to remain in place. Employees who are fully immunized, if symptomatic, will continue to be work restricted for five days after onset of symptoms, or until symptoms have improved. If fully immunized workers are asymptomatic, they will continue to be work restricted for five days after the date of their positive test.

If an unimmunized employee, who is participating in the testing option as outlined in the [Immunization or Testing of Workers for COVID-19 policy](#), tests positive for COVID-19, they will continue to be work restricted for 10 days after onset of symptoms or until symptoms have improved, whichever is longer.

All employees are asked to continue to follow the direction outlined in the [Immunization or Testing of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#) and [Attending Work with COVID-19 Symptoms, Positive Test, or Close Contact](#).

The [Return to Work Decision Chart](#) will also continue to remain in place to guide staff and managers.

These guidelines including [Daily Fit for Work Screening](#) apply to staff employed in all areas of AHS, including front-line workers, as well as those in corporate, warehouse and community settings.

We continue to encourage all staff with symptoms of illness to stay home from work. This is an important way of protecting others from COVID-19 as well as other respiratory viruses and illness circulating in our community.

Access Requirements for Designated Family/Support Persons and Visitors at AHS Sites

AHS continues to take access precautions for designated support persons and visitors at our sites to limit the transmission of COVID-19 in our facilities. These precautions need to go beyond public health measures due to the vulnerability of the patients we

care for and the need to keep services safe for Albertans when they need them. At this time, access in acute care remains restricted to what is outlined in the [Provincial DSP and Visitor Access Guidelines](#) and [AHS Directive](#) and for continuing care, what is outlined by CMOH order. All DSPs and visitors entering our sites will continue to be required to complete [entry screening](#), [continuous masking](#), perform hand hygiene, physically distance from those not from their household and follow any additional precautions as directed by staff while at a site.

Supports and Resources

As we move into the start of the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, we ask everyone to remain aware of the risks the virus continues to pose, support one another and continue to keep our guard up as we care for our community's most vulnerable.

It is understandable that you may feel uncertain about the weeks and months ahead.

AHS has several support services and resources in place to help you feel supported during this time.

Support is available through the [Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) which offers a range of services to help AHS staff navigate through work, health and life challenges.

If you feel overwhelmed about any issue, call the [Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) intake line any time at 1-877-273-3134. This service is confidential and available 24/7/365.

Physicians can 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. See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports. You can also download [Headversity](#), the resilience app, to learn skills to build your mental health. For more information or questions, please contact: wellness@ahs.ca.

Thank you

Thank you for continuing to put your very best into everything you do, each day, and for your dedication and commitment to a healthier tomorrow for all Albertans.

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