



Message from
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AHS Update: Connect Care reaches patient-portal milestone ahead of Launch 4, update on continuous masking, last chance to take Our People Pulse Survey

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.

Our Priorities

We are expanding the scope of our weekly AHS Update message. We will continue to provide the latest information on our COVID-19 response but we'll balance that with updates on the progress AHS is making on several priority areas. We have much to accomplish together in these areas, so we want to make sure our teams have the most current information on the work underway and on the work ahead.

Priority: Digital Health Evolution and Innovation

This work involves the ongoing rollout of Connect Care; continued expansion of virtual health to support more community- and home-based care, programs and services; the rollout of the PRIHS digital health program, and continued work with provincial and federal governments and industry on bringing new health innovations to market.

Connect Care teams busy with final preparations

Connect Care teams are busy with final preparations for Launch 4 of Connect Care, which is now one week away — May 28.

In the early morning hours of May 14, the laboratories at the Misericordia Community Hospital and the Grey Nuns Community Hospital in Edmonton launched Connect Care. We are so grateful for all the hard work and commitment from the teams that worked on this early launch. Congratulations!

We are also proud to announce that MyAHS Connect has hit a milestone, surpassing 100,000 patients now using the patient portal. MyAHS Connect is a secure, online, interactive tool, provided by AHS through Connect Care. It gives patients access to their health information, and allows them to manage their appointments and interact directly with their healthcare team.

These are busy days for all the Launch 4 teams and staff in Calgary and Edmonton zones, and we want to again express our deep gratitude for all the hard work and dedication they have shown.

The full Connect Care implementation timeline is available on [Insite](#).

Priority: EMS 10-Point Plan

AHS EMS continues to address ongoing system pressures and create capacity within the system, working on the initiatives first outlined in the [EMS 10-Point Plan](#). This work is focused on managing high volumes of EMS calls, freeing ambulances for urgent care needs, and ensuring our EMS workforce is robust and well supported.

EMS Provincial Service Plan development continues

Work continues on the overarching Provincial Service Plan, which will guide the next five years of EMS operations.

EMS has completed current state engagement, and received responses from hundreds of Albertans to understand current experiences and perceptions of EMS. This feedback is helping us identify areas for potential improvement, now and over the coming years. Updates are available on the [EMS Together4Health page](#) and anyone is invited to sign up and take part.

As we continue working together with our people, patients and partners, we thank everyone for their support, and will continue to keep Albertans updated on ongoing efforts to manage the sustained increase in demand for our services.

Priority: Workforce Recruitment and Retention

This work involves supporting our current workforce following more than two years of pandemic response, as well as recruiting and retaining needed healthcare workers supported by the Integrated Workforce Action Plan.

Northern rural communities welcome new family physicians

Rural Albertans now have improved access to primary care services with the recruitment of family physicians now practising in several northern communities.

Dr. Jerryton Oriabure is now providing care at High Prairie Community Health and Wellness Clinic and the High Prairie Health Complex. He is also accepting new patients. Dr. Oriabure's recruitment brings the number of family physicians in the community to six.

Dr. Chinedu Ebisike is now practising at the Elk Point Healthcare Centre and at his clinic. He is accepting new patients. Dr. Ebisike's recruitment brings the number of permanent physicians working in Elk Point to three.

Dr. Firas Hussein is now practising in McLennan/Falher at the Sacred Heart Community Health Centre and at the Falher Medical Clinic. He is accepting new patients.

Priority: Alberta Surgical Initiative

AHS is dedicated to ensuring Albertans have access to high-quality and safe care. Timely access to surgeries is important to Albertans. No one should have to wait

longer than clinically recommended for their surgery. In partnership with Alberta Health, AHS developed the Alberta Surgical Initiative, a plan to improve surgery in Alberta by shaping demand, managing capacity, and improving the patient's journey to receiving surgery.

Current surgical status

We continue to work diligently to recover to pre-pandemic surgical status. Over the past four weeks, the average of weekly volumes for surgical activity is 90 per cent of our pre-pandemic surgical volumes. Our total surgical wait list for adults sits at approximately 71,740, compared to approximately 74,300 at the beginning of April. In February 2020, before the pandemic, our total wait list was 68,000.

Supports When You Need Them

Book a Wellness Seminar for Languishing

After more than two years of pandemic, many of us feel in a state of rinse and repeat. Feeling numb, indifferent or stagnant is called languishing.

Through the COVID-19: [What is Languishing and Why is it Important? wellness seminar](#), you will learn to better understand languishing, as well as self-care tips to boost your resilience and well-being. You can book this seminar as well as many others for your team by submitting a [request form](#) to wellness@ahs.ca.

For support with any issue, call the [EFAP](#) intake line 24/7/365 at 1-877-273-3134. 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.

Support is available if you ever feel uncertain or overwhelmed. 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 proactively build your mental health.

COVID-19 Status

ICU Update

As of 9:20 a.m. today (May 20), AHS has 210 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 18 additional spaces above our baseline of 192 general adult ICU beds. There are 160 patients in ICU. Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 76 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 83 per cent.

Hospitalizations

On May 16, 1,123 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19,

compared to 1,232 individuals on May 9, an 8.9 per cent decrease.

Variants of Concern

Alberta Precision Laboratories continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants. From May 10-16, an average of 74 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was 97 per cent Omicron BA.2 lineage, three per cent Omicron BA.1, and Delta was not detected during this period.

A single case of Omicron BA.4 has been detected in Alberta from a sample collected in early May. BA.4 is a lineage of Omicron that has been detected at low levels in several countries but high case numbers have been observed in South Africa. While BA.4 appears to transmit more readily than BA.2 due to its ability to evade immunity from immunization or prior infection, there is no evidence it causes more severe disease than other Omicron lineages.

Recombinant SARS-CoV-2 strains have been detected and are circulating in Alberta, as well as across Canada and the world at very low levels. The recombinants detected in Alberta are recombinants within the Omicron lineage and are not thought to be of any increased biological concern compared with the predominant BA.2 strain.

Recombinants occur as part of the evolution of SARS-CoV-2, and are being monitored as we remain in frequent communication with our provincial and national public health partners.

New Cases

For the seven-day period ending on May 16, there was an average of 516 new cases of COVID-19 per day, compared to 649 cases per day the previous reporting period (May 3-9), a 20.5 per cent decrease. The Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 1,662 (an average of 237 new cases per day). All five zones reported a decrease in the number of new cases this reporting period, compared to the previous week, as you can see in the table below:

Zone	New Cases (May 10-16)	New Cases (May 3-9)	Percent Change
Calgary	1,662	1,964	-15.4%
Edmonton	1,172	1,521	-23.0%
North	275	355	-22.5%
Central	314	405	-22.5%
South	184	295	-37.6%
Unknown	7	0	n/a
Total	3,614	4,540	-20.4%

Please note: We know these data underestimate the number of people with COVID-19 across the province, and changes in testing eligibility make it difficult to compare cases week over week.

Wastewater Surveillance

Wastewater can provide an early indication of infection trends in a community. For wastewater surveillance comparing weekly averages:

- South Zone (Brooks, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Taber): All locations reported decreases in the amount of COVID-19 RNA in the wastewater, or remained stable.
- Calgary Zone (Airdrie, Banff, Calgary, Canmore, High River, Okotoks, Strathmore): High River and Banff increased this week; the other five locations decreased.
- Central Zone (Red Deer, Lacombe, Drumheller): The Red Deer area increased slightly this week. Drumheller decreased; Lacombe was stable.
- Edmonton Zone (Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan): Both locations increased this week.
- North Zone (Cold Lake, Edson, Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie): Grande Prairie and Cold Lake increased, while the other two locations decreased or remained stable.

Frequency of reporting updates vary by sampling site. The above interpretations were made from available data as of May 16 at noon. The Alberta Wastewater Surveillance Program is a collaboration between the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, APL and Alberta Health.

Other notable COVID-19-related information:

- Data from the last seven days indicate that 31.4 per cent of new admissions to non-ICU spaces are due to COVID-19 infection directly, 31.1 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause, and 37.5 per cent are cases where the infection was not determined to be a cause of admission, or where it was not possible to determine. For ICU, the percentage of new admissions due to COVID-19 directly was 33.3 per cent; 45.8 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause, and 20.9 per cent were incidental infections or unclear.
- As of May 16, 4,452 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 61 since the last report. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- As of May 16, 578,291 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and 26,186 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.5 individuals for every 100 cases.
- From May 10-16, 18,349 COVID-19 tests were completed, a seven-day average of 2,621 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 17.4 per cent to 22.5 per cent.

Things You Need to Know

Interim CEO Video Message — Importance of Business Continuity Management

One of the biggest things we've learned during this pandemic is the importance of being prepared. Some of that comes from our experience from previous events such as H1N1 and the various floods and wildfires we've successfully weathered over the years.

But it's important to remember that being prepared doesn't happen by accident. It requires people from various disciplines coming together, actively planning for how we can mitigate the effects of these incidents and learning from each experience.

One of the key players in this work is our [Business Continuity Management team](#), which has been actively working behind the scenes with programs and sites across AHS to help with this planning.

Joining the AHS Vlog to [talk about their work and the importance of Business Continuity Management](#) are:

- Michael Hiller, Director, Business Continuity Management.
- Michael Timmins, Manager, Business Continuity Management Strategic Operations.



Update On Continuous Masking

After more than two years of living and working in a pandemic, it is understandable that Albertans and healthcare workers are tired of COVID-19, and the guidelines and restrictions that remain in place to reduce the spread of the virus.

With many public COVID-19 guidelines rescinded, many are asking why continuous masking remains in place at AHS facilities?

While reducing restrictions may be an appropriate measure for the average Albertan, most individuals seeking care at AHS sites are more vulnerable to severe outcomes

from COVID-19. Wearing a mask in all healthcare settings may help protect individuals at higher risk of getting severely ill if they catch COVID-19, as well as the healthcare workers who provide care.

Community spread continues

While we would all like to believe that the pandemic is behind us, there are approximately 1,300 individuals who have COVID-19 receiving care in our hospitals.

There is significant ongoing community spread which impacts our clinics, emergency departments, urgent care centres and inpatient beds.

So while COVID-19 continues to circulate in our community, we ask all visitors, staff, physicians, volunteers, and designated support persons to **mask up** in patient care areas, and other common spaces, including cafeterias and waiting areas.

How is the decision to keep continuous masking in place made?

COVID-19 is a challenging pandemic to manage. We continue to monitor multiple parameters, including wastewater data and hospitalization numbers in Alberta. We are making active decisions regarding the PPE needed for protection of both staff/physicians and patients based on these and other relevant factors.

As we continue to enforce continuous masking, we also want to remind everyone that all AHS and Covenant sites will continue to require visitors to perform hand hygiene, physical distancing and health screening upon entry.

We are working hard to be the best we can for all Albertans while continuing to provide care to those who need us.

We thank you for helping us do that by doing your part, and **mask up**.

No Monkeypox Cases in Alberta

Monkeypox is a rare pox-like disease that can be acquired by humans, although the chances of this are extremely low. Monkeypox usually occurs sporadically in forested parts of Central and West Africa through transmission from animal bites or contact with body fluids from infected animals. In the last few weeks, cases have been reported from Quebec, as well as the U.K., Spain, Portugal, and the U.S.

There are no cases in Alberta at this time.

Monkeypox does not spread easily between people but transmission can occur through contact with body fluids, monkeypox sores, or items that have recently been contaminated with fluids or sores (clothing, bedding, etc.). Transmission through respiratory droplets following prolonged face-to-face contact is also possible.

Alberta is working with federal, provincial and territorial partners to monitor the

situation. However, there does not appear to be an elevated risk in the province. Updates will be provided as they become available.

Last Chance to Take Our People Pulse Survey

It's your last chance to complete the five-question Our People Pulse Survey and let us know how you are doing and what you need to feel supported. The more voices we hear on well-being and engagement, the better informed our team discussions will be about what's working and what could be better.

Check your inbox for an email from Gallup and click on your personalized survey link using any device. If you haven't received an email from Gallup, check your junk folder.

Questions? See [Insite](#) or Email engage@ahs.ca.

Today is Clinical Trials Day

It's International Clinical Trials Day today (May 20), which gives us a chance to celebrate the importance of research in improving healthcare.

AHS is an evidence-driven, learning organization that supports advancing research wherever possible. Last year, AHS received nearly 1,400 requests to initiate clinical studies (including surveys, interviews, physical assessments and highly regulated clinical trials).

Each year, the thousands of Albertans who participate in clinical trials contribute to the evidence that helps launch new therapies or innovative devices. Patients who take part in surveys, interviews or physical assessments provide valuable input towards improving health and outcomes for others.

To learn more about some of the breadth and diversity of research taking place in Alberta, see the most recent [Research and Innovation 2020/2021 Annual Report](#).

To find out more about how clinical trials work and how they are supported by AHS, visit albertacancerclinicaltrials.ca and [Participate in Research](#).

To find out more about active clinical trials happening in Alberta and how you can help patients and families get involved, visit: [Be The Cure – You can help find new cures](#).

Life Cycle for Kids Raises Funds for Children's Hospitals

As we head into the warmer months, we wanted to let you know about an exciting new event that encourages Albertans to get active for a great cause.

From June 1 to 30, the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation are teaming up for the month-long cycling challenge [Life Cycle](#).

Participants can sign up as a team or individually, set a distance goal, and inspire family, friends and community members to help raise funds for both charities. On June 25, participants will also be able to celebrate their successful fundraising at in-person 'Last Lap' events in Edmonton and Calgary.

Dollars raised from the event will support Child Life programs, such as pet therapy, music therapy, art therapy and horticultural therapy at the Alberta Children's Hospital and the Stollery Children's Hospital.

If you are interested in taking part, please visit lifecycleforkids.com for more information.



Be Well - Be Kind

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. See recent messages of gratitude on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

Wrapping Up

Welcome to the May long weekend. We know 2022 has already felt like a long year due to our daily pressures and challenges. This weekend, we encourage you to find some time to rest and recharge ... and if it's your thing, to watch Games 2 and 3 of the Battle of Alberta tonight and Sunday. (We don't care who you cheer for!) If you're working throughout the Victoria Day weekend, thank you for your efforts but please try to find another time to unplug from work and practise some self-care. Always be good to yourself. Thank you for everything you do for patients, families and each other.

With enduring appreciation,

Mauro Chies

Interim AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

