



Message from  
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Dr. Laura McDougall

## *AHS Update: Entry Screening at AHS Continuing Care Sites Still Required, Take the AHS Update Survey*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

### Today's Update

- **Our Priorities**
- **Supports When You Need Them**
- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **Entry Screening at AHS Continuing Care Sites Still Required**
- **Availability of Booster Doses**
- **Have Your Say on the Future of the AHS Update**
- **Interim CEO Video Message — Spotlight on Health Link**
- **Wrapping Up — enjoying the summer and a change to the AHS Update**

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

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The AHS Update message includes the latest information on our COVID-19 response, as well as updates on the progress AHS is making on its 10 priority areas. Each edition will include updates on specific initiatives connected to some of the 10 priorities. 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: Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI)**

The Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI) will improve timely access to surgical care in Alberta. The goal of ASI is to ensure adult and pediatric patients receive scheduled surgeries within clinically appropriate timeframes.

*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 89 per cent of our pre-pandemic surgical volumes. Our total surgical wait list for adults sits at approximately 72,301, compared to approximately 72,860 at the beginning of May. In February 2020, before the pandemic, our total wait list was 68,000.

*Optimizing resource utilization and improving capacity*

Patients are at the heart of every decision made at AHS. Our focus is on providing high-quality care and positive patient experiences. These goals are important to projects under the ASI, such as the Day Surgery and Short Stay Optimization (DSO) project. With the DSO, innovative solutions for patient's surgical care are being sought to improve patient recovery and support health system capacity.

The goal of DSO is to optimize the use of day surgery techniques to minimize utilization of inpatient beds and reduce length of stay using perioperative management and virtual care technologies.

This particular project will build on the experience of the Edmonton Zone Virtual Hospital to reduce a patient's length of stay in the 'bricks and mortar' hospital, with a shorter timeframe for patients to return to their home and community.

This work is just beginning, and the DSO team will be collaborating and engaging with patients and families, communities, AHS staff, physicians and leaders, and project areas as it moves forward.

More updates on this will be shared as they are available.

## Supports When You Need Them

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**New online wellness seminars**

We can all take steps to improve our mental health. One way is by attending one-hour virtual [Wellness Seminars](#) that cover a range of topics to support your well-being. The new schedule is now available online and you can register on [MyLearningLink](#). Leaders can also schedule seminars for their teams and select from the topics available in the [catalogue](#).

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.

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. Questions? Contact [wellness@ahs.ca](mailto:wellness@ahs.ca).

## COVID-19 Status

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### ICU Update

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

We will ensure that we maintain ICU capacity above daily demand to a planned maximum of 380 beds as long as staff and physician availability allows.

We currently have 214 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 15 additional spaces above our baseline of 199 general adult ICU beds. There are currently 167 patients in ICU.

- Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 78 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 84 per cent.
- In Calgary Zone, we currently have 79 ICU beds. Calgary Zone ICU is operating at 87 per cent of current capacity (including eight COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In Edmonton Zone, we currently have 83 ICU beds, including five additional spaces. Edmonton Zone is operating at 83 per cent of current capacity (including five COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In Central Zone, we currently have 18 ICU beds, including six additional spaces. Central Zone ICU is operating at 44 per cent of current capacity (including one COVID-19 patient in ICU).
- In South Zone, we currently have 21 ICU beds. South Zone ICU is currently operating at 52 per cent capacity (there are currently no COVID-19 patients in ICU).
- In North Zone, we have 13 ICU spaces (split between Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray), including four additional ICU spaces. North Zone ICU is currently operating at 77 per cent capacity (including two COVID-19 patients in ICU).

### Hospitalizations

On June 27, 576 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19, compared to 665 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on June 20, a 13.4 per cent decrease.

### Variants of Concern

APL continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants. From June 21-27, an average of 72 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was 52 per cent Omicron BA.2 lineage and 48 per cent non-BA.2 Omicron lineages (comprising BA.1, BA.4, and BA.5 cases).

As global data is updated, sub-lineage designations are refined which may affect lineage calls in Alberta. We continue to monitor our data and adjust as information becomes available. BA.4 and BA.5 are lineages of Omicron that have been detected at low levels in a number of countries but high case numbers have been observed in South Africa and Portugal. While BA.4 and BA.5 appear to transmit more readily than BA.2 due to their ability to evade immunity from immunization or prior infection, there is no evidence that they cause 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 June 27, there was an average of 135 new cases of COVID-19 detected per day, compared to 155 cases per day the previous reporting period (June 14 to June 20) a 12.9 per cent decrease. The Calgary zone reported the highest total number of detected new cases with 410 (an average of 59 detections per day). Four out of five zones reported a decrease in the number of new cases detected this reporting period, compared to the previous week as you can see in the table below:

Zone	New Cases (June 21 – June 27)	New Cases (June 14 – June 20)	Percent Change
Calgary	410	476	-13.9%
Edmonton	307	380	-19.2%
North	62	75	-17.3%
Central	86	77	+11.7%
South	73	74	-1.4%
Unknown	5	0	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>1,082</b>	<b>-12.9%</b>

### **Wastewater Surveillance**

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

- Across nineteen wastewater sites in Alberta, eight sites showed a 25 per cent increase in COVID-19 RNA in their wastewater, these were Taber, Banff, Strathmore, Drumheller, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Edson, and Cold Lake.
- This is the second week of a reported increase for Fort McMurray and Edson.
- The other eleven locations had no significant changes or decreased by more than 25 per cent.

Frequency of reporting updates vary by sampling site. The above interpretations were made from available data as of June 27 at noon.

The Alberta Wastewater Surveillance Program is a collaboration between the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, APL and Alberta Health. Wastewater can provide an early indication of infection trends in a community.

### **Other notable COVID-19-related information:**

- Data from the last seven days indicate that 40.2 per cent of new admissions with COVID-19 to non-ICU spaces are due to COVID-19 infection directly, 33.6 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 26.2 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 with COVID-19, due to COVID-19 directly, was 12.5 per cent; 50.0 per cent had COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 37.5 per cent were incidental infections or unclear.

- As of June 27, 4,621 individuals have passed away from COVID-19 including 17 deaths 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 June 27, a total of 588,691 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 27,488 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.7 individuals for every 100 cases.
- From June 21 to June 27, 8,218 COVID-19 tests were completed, a seven-day average of 1,174 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 9.45 per cent to 13.36 per cent.

## Things You Need to Know

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### **Entry Screening at AHS Continuing Care Sites Still Required**

AHS is committed to supporting family presence and visitation in acute care, ambulatory care, urgent care and emergency care services as we enter the pandemic recovery phase.

While [the province has removed several CMOH orders](#) related to continuing care, all AHS owned and operated sites, inclusive of continuing care, continue to require designated family/support person and visitor screening due to the vulnerability of many patients and residents at these facilities.

At this time, please continue to use the [COVID-19 Continuing Care Daily Checklist](#) to screen all visitors upon entry. We understand that entry requirements can be challenging for patients, families and the staff who must enforce them and we thank you for your continued understanding and patience.

If you have any questions regarding this notification, please contact [ECC@ahs.ca](mailto:ECC@ahs.ca).

### **Availability of Booster Doses**

To continue to protect one another and the Albertans that need our care, we continue to encourage our healthcare teams and all Albertans to receive all doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for which they are eligible.

First booster doses of the COVID-19 vaccine continue to be available for all Albertans age 12 and older. First booster doses are administered at a minimum of five months after a primary series.

The following individuals remain eligible for second booster doses of vaccine:

- All people 70+
- First Nations, Metis or Inuit people 65+
- All residents of seniors congregate care, regardless of age

Second booster doses are administered at a minimum of five months after a first booster dose.

Decisions about eligibility for COVID vaccination are made by the Government of Alberta. These decisions are informed by the recommendations of expert groups, including the National Committee on Immunization and the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization. You can learn more about [who is eligible and find updates here](#).

We encourage everyone to get immunized with whichever dose they are eligible for as soon as possible. You can [book an appointment for COVID-19 vaccine](#) if you're eligible through the [online booking tool](#), at participating pharmacies and physicians' offices, or by calling Health Link at 811.

### **Have Your Say on the Future of the AHS Update**

The AHS Update newsletter has continued to evolve over the past two years, starting as a daily tool to keep us informed of the ever-changing world in the early days of the pandemic. Now that we are shifting our focus, we would like your input.



Your feedback will help us ensure you get the most valuable information about our organization, and let us know how we can best deliver it to you. Please [complete this survey](#) to help shape the future of the newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you.

### **Interim CEO Video Message: Spotlight on Health Link**

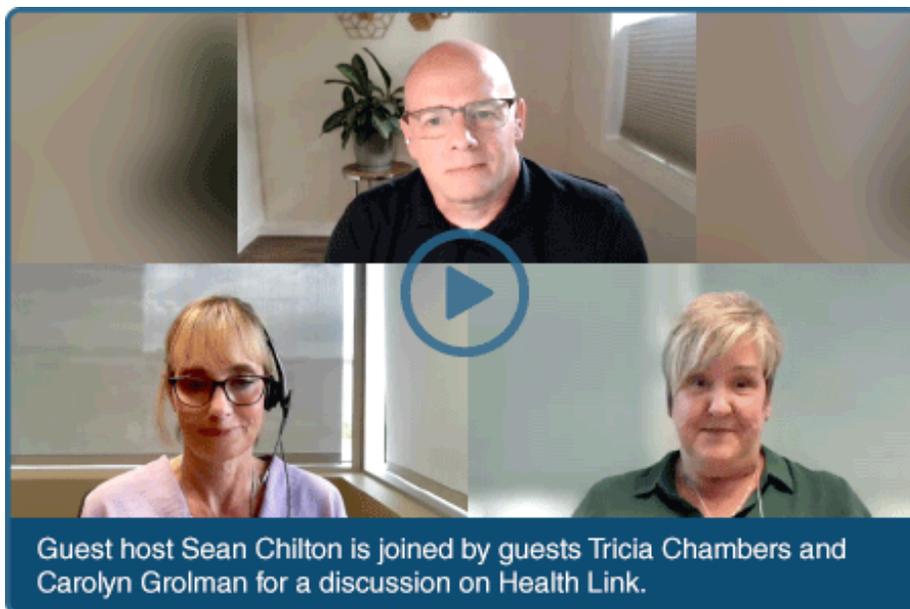
Most people are aware of Health Link 8-1-1, our telephone health information and advice line that's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But what you might not know is Health Link has served Albertans for about 22 years.

Albertans have come to rely on this vital service and know it as a trusted care option. The registered nurses and other healthcare professionals who work for Health Link provide care to thousands of Albertans each day, and played an even bigger role during our pandemic response.

Health Link received around 1,900 calls each day back in 2019. At the peak of the pandemic, it was up to 10,000 calls each day. Today they average up to 4,500 calls each day.

The scope of Health Link's work has also expanded since those pre-pandemic days. [Joining guest host Sean Chilton to discuss this and more](#) are:

- Tricia Chambers, Senior Provincial Director, Provincial Clinical Programs & Virtual Health
- Carolyn Grolman, Provincial Director Health Link-811



## Be Well - Be Kind

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### **Wrapping Up – finding time to enjoy the summer and a change to the AHS update**

Summer and a long weekend are upon us, and we hope you find time to rest, recharge and spend time with your loved ones. For those who will be working in our facilities this long weekend, thank you so much for your commitment and dedication. Our patients and your colleagues appreciate your efforts, and we hope you are able to take some time away from work soon.

And as of this edition, this AHS Update will arrive in your inbox every second week, as opposed to weekly. Watch for our next update on July 15, and please take the time to fill out the [AHS Update survey](#) to have your say on the future of this newsletter.

Have a great weekend, and for those with outdoor plans, let's hope the weather cooperates.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

#### **Mauro Chies**

Interim AHS President & CEO

#### **Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health