

CMO SMOH Weekly Notice for AHS Medical Staff

Please watch your inbox for your invitation to be immunized for protection from COVID-19. The message will come to your preferred inbox from “AHS booking” and it will be titled: “AHS COVID-19 Immunization Booking”.

January 15, 2021

This week:

- COVID-19 Vaccine Resources to Bookmark **New**
- COVID-19 Vaccination Update **New**
- Adverse Events Following Immunization **New**
- Annual Information Verification and Attestation (AIVA) Process Change **Reminder**
- Verna’s Weekly Video Message — Answering Common Vaccination Rollout Questions **New**
- Scientific Advisory Group Rapid Reviews **New**
 - Vitamin D in the Treatment and Prevention of COVID-19
 - Venous Thromboembolism Prevention and Screening in COVID-19 Patients
- Doc of the Week **New**
- COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta **Update**
- COVID-19 Testing for healthcare workers — the latest numbers **Update**
- Changes to Online Access to Test Results Coming Feb. 1 **New**
- Influenza Immunization Update **New**
- Additional Resources for Physicians

COVID-19 Vaccine Resources to Bookmark

- [AHS Vaccine Information](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#); Includes vaccination updates
- [COVID-19 Immunization Online Booking Tool](#)
- [Government of Alberta Vaccination Updates](#)

For more information about COVID-19 vaccines, common side effects and recommendations on use, please visit National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) [website](#). Please see the [AHS vaccine website](#) for ongoing updates as they become available.

For AHS Medical Staff questions, please email cmo@ahs.ca.

For all other AHS staff inquiries, please email AHSVaccineTaskforce@ahs.ca.

COVID-19 Vaccination Update

Vaccination Statistics and Supply

As of noon today, more than 69,600 Albertans received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, including:

- 32,100+ Healthcare workers
- 22,100+ Long Term Care (LTC) and Designated Supportive Living (DSL) staff
- 22,000+ LTC/DSL residents

Today Pfizer informed the federal government that there will be a temporary delay in vaccine shipments due to expansion plans at its European facility. Shipments to Canada are expected to continue in the coming weeks but the number of doses will be fewer. Pfizer believes it will be able to restore supply by the end of March.

Next week, the amount of vaccine that Canada receives will be reduced by about 20 per cent. The week after that, trays will be reduced by 80 per cent, and the two weeks that follow will see only half of the expected doses entering Canada. We are waiting for more information from the federal government about how this will affect Alberta's allocation of vaccine for the coming weeks. Click [here](#) for more information.

Meanwhile, about 16,900 additional doses of the Moderna vaccine arrived today (Jan. 15), bringing the total COVID-19 vaccine received this week to approximately 41,000 doses. These doses will be distributed across the province as we work to immunize as many Albertans against COVID-19 as quickly as possible.

COVID-19 Immunization Highlights this Week

- Paramedics and emergency medical technicians became eligible for COVID-19 immunization in all AHS zones, as announced by [Alberta Health](#) on Jan. 11.
- First dose of COVID-19 immunization at all continuing care facilities in northern Alberta was completed on [Jan. 11](#).
- Second dose immunization window was expanded on [Jan. 12](#). Going forward, second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will be offered within 42 days after the first dose. If you have already booked your appointment for your second dose, we will honour your appointment. For residents of long-term care and designated supportive living facilities, we will continue to offer the shorter interval of three to four weeks (21 to 28 days). More information on the rationale for this change is available in the [Jan. 13 AHS COVID-19 Immunization Update](#).
- AHS and Covenant Health are piloting a program to bring temporary satellite COVID-19 immunization clinics to some emergency departments throughout the province. As of [Jan. 13](#), nine satellite clinics have already taken place, with more than 425 emergency department staff immunized. As more vaccine becomes available, additional clinics will be opened for eligible staff.

More Information for Staff and Physicians:

If you believe you are an eligible healthcare worker but have not yet been contacted to book your COVID-19 immunization appointment:

- We know everyone is anxiously awaiting their turn for immunization and we thank you for your patience. We are doing all we can to roll out vaccine as soon as supply is available.
- Staff eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine will receive an email directly from AHS with a unique link. Please check your email for your appointment booking invitation from AHS Booking and click your one-time link, as soon as possible. Visit the FAQ page if you have questions about this process.
- Lists of individuals in each eligible group as identified by Alberta Health were provided proactively and are being sent out in batches. Some may receive these emails before others. Please allow time for these emails to be sent, as, due to the volume, it takes time for everyone's information to get loaded into the system and the emails sent. Please be patient if you have not yet received your email.
- If you feel you have been missed in your phase, please reach out to your supervisor or medical leader. Do not call Health Link. Physicians should email cmo@ahs.ca.
- We are extremely grateful for the patience of all staff, physicians and Albertans who are waiting to be immunized.

If you have questions about when you will be eligible and if you can be prioritized or added to a waitlist:

- AHS is working within the immunization allocation parameters outlined by Alberta Health to provide immunization to key populations as vaccine supply becomes available. Please refer to the [Alberta Health website](#) for the current list of eligible healthcare workers.
- Immunization appointments are currently available to eligible healthcare workers in the current phase (Phase 1).
- Decisions around COVID-19 sequencing are being made very thoughtfully and carefully. We understand the significant impact of these decisions, and this weighs heavily on us. We do not make these decisions lightly.
- We would love to be able to immunize everyone who interacts with patients and families immediately. The reality is that it's going to take some time, primarily due to vaccine availability. We recognize that many staff and healthcare partners work with higher-risk patients who are vulnerable to COVID-19, and with COVID-19-positive cases, and we greatly appreciate the vital work you do.
- At this time there are no wait lists to join or applications for early immunization consideration.
- In the face of very limited supply, healthcare workers included in the initial phases are selected to ensure we protect patients, residents and clients at highest risk of severe outcomes and to ensure the health system can continue to respond.
- We anticipate in the coming weeks and months, and as we move into Phase 2 of the province's phased immunization program, the COVID-19 vaccine will be available to all healthcare workers. More information will be available as soon as plans are finalized.

Adverse Events Following Immunization

An important component of all immunization programs is monitoring for safety of each vaccine. The [Canadian National Vaccine Safety Network \(CANVAS\)](#) is working with acute care and public health organizations in several provinces, including Alberta, to determine the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

Led by the ACHIEVE Research Team, in collaboration with AHS and AH, this project will collect information about health events after receiving COVID-19 vaccines using web-based surveys after each vaccine dose and 6 months after both doses.

This information, as well as any reports to [AHS' Adverse Event Following Immunization \(AEFI\) program](#), will provide detailed information to the province about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines and contribute to the national program.

Take the [COVID-19 Vaccine Safety Survey](#).

Reminder: Annual Information Verification and Attestation (AIVA) Process Change

The AIVA submission process is moving online. On January 18, you will be sent an email asking you to complete your 2021 AIVA electronically by clicking on a link to a secure website.

This simplified process for AIVA is an opportunity to update your contact information. We use this information to distribute important communication, including urgent notifications. For example, vaccination notifications are provided based on information you share through your AIVA update.

Once logged in to the secure website, you will be able to:

- Review and update your personal information
- Answer attestation questions
- Review your medical staff appointment and privileges and request a change form if you wish

You will also see if AHS already has a copy of your practice permit and/or liability coverage on file and if not, you will be able to upload copies.

Completing the AIVA online this year should take the average practitioner less than five minutes and can be done on a smart phone, tablet or computer.

For more information, please contact your Medical Staff Office. If you experience technical issues, please contact local Medical Affairs office or email AIVA@ahs.ca.

Verna's Weekly Video Message — Answering Common Vaccination Rollout Questions

We know the COVID-19 vaccine is at the top of everyone's minds lately, which is why, last week, we started sharing [regular email updates](#) (login required).

We also felt it was a good idea to use this week's vlog to talk to you about the COVID-19 immunization rollout and answer some common questions you may have.

Here with Verna to talk more about the vaccination rollout are:

- Dr. Laura McDougall, Senior Medical Officer of Health.
- Dr. Cheri Nijssen-Jordan, Vaccine Task Force Co-Lead .
- Rod Kaliei, Executive Director, Workplace Health and Safety.

Laura, Cheri and Rod discuss how the immunization phases were decided, how the online immunization booking tool works, and what AHS is doing to immunize people as quickly as we can. Please note this vlog was taped before today's Pfizer announcement to temporarily reduce vaccine shipments to Canada.

Watch the video [here](#).

Scientific Advisory Group Rapid Reviews

Rapid Review: Vitamin D in the Treatment and Prevention of COVID-19

The Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) conducted a review of the effectiveness and safety of vitamin D in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19, and to determine if people with low vitamin D levels were at higher risk of COVID-19.

The review found that there was no high quality evidence that vitamin D supplementation is effective in the prevention or treatment of COVID-19. The review noted though, that for general health, guidelines recommend the use of vitamin D for maintaining bone health regardless of the effects on COVID-19.

For more information, see the [Rapid Review](#).

Rapid Review: Venous Thromboembolism Prevention and Screening in COVID-19 Patients

SAG also conducted a rapid review to provide guidance for medical teams to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolisms, which combined are referred to as venous thromboembolism (VTE), in patients hospitalized for COVID-19.

The review of available medical literature found the following:

- COVID-19 patients in hospital are at higher risk of venous thromboembolism
- COVID-19 patients in hospital should receive the usual preventative blood thinners recommended for hospitalized patients at VTE risk, unless there are contraindications (usually once daily low-molecular weight heparin products such as tinzaparin).
- Rather than relying on elevation in D-dimer blood tests, further testing should be done if there are clinical symptoms or signs suspicious for VTE complications (such as unexplained high heart rate, low blood pressure, one-sided leg swelling, worsening shortness of breath or low oxygen status, etc.).
- Higher than usual preventative doses of blood thinners are not recommended as new evidence suggests that this increases bleeding risk without adding much benefit.

- Standard dosing and the usual length of preventative therapy, usually until the patient is fully ambulatory or discharged, is recommended in COVID-19 patients.

For more information, see the [Rapid Review](#).

Doc of the Week – Dr. Tafi Madzimure

In early March 2020, Dr. Tafi Madzimure, Zone Program Medical Director for Critical Care in Grande Prairie quickly pulled a team of family physicians together and trained them so they could assist within the ICU and COVID-19 floors if need be. This included scheduling ICU physicians and pairing them with a family physician. Dr. Madzimure ensured Anesthetists were also included in the planning and scheduling.

Plans were made for different levels of surges, including staffing and potential units being rearranged to support the surge levels. Activation teams were on standby should the number of COVID-19 patients increase. The Chief of Emergency was also consulted to ensure the Critical Care unit could support them through the patient volume should this occur.

When an increase in patients who tested positive for COVID-19 occurred this past fall, Dr. Madzimure worked to reestablish the earlier plan and ensured the full team was prepared in the event they were needed.

Thank you, Dr. Madzimure, for your ongoing efforts, strategic planning, and support for your colleagues and Albertans.

COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta

Alberta's average number of daily new cases is down this week, as are our hospitalization and ICU numbers. This week, 172 people in the province lost their lives to the coronavirus, a sobering reminder that we are still in the midst of a pandemic.

There was an average of 876 daily new cases for the seven-day period ending on Jan. 13, compared to 981 the previous week, an 11 per cent decrease. As of Jan. 13, there were 12,434 active cases in the province compared to 13,298 the previous week, a 6.5 per cent decrease.

The table below shows the number of active cases in each zone for the last two weeks. It's worth noting that, for the first time in nine weeks, the Calgary Zone has the most active cases in the province.

	Active Cases (as of Jan. 13)	Active Cases (as of Jan. 6)	Per cent Change
Calgary	4,691	4,739	-1.0%
Edmonton	4,570	5,465	-16.4%
Central	1,635	1,384	+18.1%
North	1,152	1,381	-16.6%
South	362	252	+43.7%
Unknown	24	77	-68.8%

Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

On Jan. 13, there were 806 individuals with COVID-19 in hospitals across the province compared to 871 on Jan. 6, a seven per cent decrease. Also on Jan. 13, there were 136 individuals in intensive care compared to 139 on Jan. 6, a two per cent decrease.

The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Jan. 13 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	ICUs
Edmonton	409	60
Calgary	220	46

Central	77	8
North	75	15
South	25	7

Other notable COVID-19-related information

- As of Jan. 13, a total of 114,585 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and a total of 4,858 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.2 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 100,762 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of Jan. 13, 1,389 individuals have passed away from COVID-19. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- From Jan. 7 to Jan. 13, 93,932 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 13,419 per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 5.31 per cent to 7.10 per cent. As of Jan. 13, a total of 2,982,611 tests have been conducted and 1,704,911 individuals have been tested. While test volumes have decreased from late November/early December, it is recommended that individuals get tested if they exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19, are a close contact of a COVID-19 case and/or are a worker/resident at a specific outbreak site.

COVID-19 testing for healthcare workers — the latest numbers

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#). These statistics provide the total number of AHS, Covenant Health 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 January 13:

- 74,538 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,127 (or 5.53 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 1,084 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 345 (or 31.8 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 3,043 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,818 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 185 (or 3.84 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 49 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 8 (or 16.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 136 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](#) and [dashboard](#).

Changes to Online Access to Test Results Coming Feb. 1

In 2021, Albertans will be able to view more lab test results in the Government of Alberta’s My Health Records (MHR), the single access point for Albertans’ personal health information. These lab results will be viewable through the Government of Alberta’s My Personal Records (MPR) application.

Starting Feb. 1, about 95 per cent of the most commonly-ordered lab test results will be viewable, with all remaining lab tests, including more complex results in microbiology, pathology and genetics, will be available in MPR by July 1. Lab results ordered from all sites in Alberta, including labs ordered during inpatient and emergency visits will be included in MPR.

This change is being made to provide Albertans with more access to their health information, and as an additional safety net for patient care within the system. Once the changes are in place, new users will

see an 18-month retrospective view of any lab results slated for release. Existing users will not have labs added retroactively, but they will be able to see the expanded lab results moving forward. After the changes, patients will have immediate access to more of their own information.

Providers may notice some changes in their patterns of work, and may need to consider giving patients more information about the implications of different results when initially ordering a test. Physicians and other providers will continue to have access to results information through their usual channels, including Alberta Netcare.

For more information about lab results online, please visit [FAQ: MyHealth Records: Lab Results Online via My Personal Records](#).

To provide support and information to physicians, the Alberta Medical Association (AMA) and AHS will be hosting webinars for providers:

Webinar: Real Time Release of Labs to Patients: What This Means to Your Practice

Speakers: Dr. Allen Ausford, Dr. Brad Bahler, Dr. Jay Easaw, Dr. Rob Hayward, Dr. Nigel Flook

Wednesday, January 20

- Time: 12 p.m.
- Moderator: Dr. Heidi Fell, Informatics Chair, AMA
- Register: <https://albertadoctors.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJEduqqjgsGtDTMnZy0HftCmbufOJQlxf>

Wednesday, January 27

- Time: 5 p.m.
- Moderator: Dr. Stuart Rosser, Interim Chief Medical Information Officer, AHS
- Register: <http://ahs-cis.ca/mhrwebinar>

Thank you for your continued partnership and the care you deliver every day to patients and families.

Influenza Immunization Update

More than 1.5 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. This is an increase of more than 37,400 doses since last week and immunizations are up by 226,744 compared to the same time last year.

For the tenth week in row, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta. The weekly influenza data report is available at ahs.ca/influenza. The weekly influenza data report is available at ahs.ca/influenza.

Additional Resources for Physicians:

- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [AHS Vaccine Information](#)
- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#): Includes vaccination updates
- [COVID-19 Immunization Online Booking Tool](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria](#)
- [CPSA's physician portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [Government of Alberta Vaccination Updates](#)
- [How to Access AHS Insite and Email](#)
- [How to do a Nasopharyngeal \(NP\) Swab](#) (New England Journal of Medicine)
- [IPC Emerging Issues](#)

- [Online Healthcare Worker Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Physician & Family Support Program](#) - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- [Spectrum](#) – A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- COVID-19 Questions? Contact your local Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC):
 - ZEOC.South@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca
 - ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca
 - PCH.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca

For more information

- Visit the [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page](#) on the AHS website for more information or contact AHS.ECC@ahs.ca.
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).

This update, provided every Friday, is intended to provide a summary of the key action items, information and decisions for AHS Medical Staff in relation to clinical policies and practices, and for the COVID-19 pandemic response. It is forwarded to physicians' preferred email inbox.

Do you have COVID-19 questions, information, or a physician or team who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic, that you would like to see covered in an upcoming edition of the COVID-19 CMO update? Let us know at CMO@ahs.ca.

Sincerely,

Dr. Francois Belanger

Chief Medical Officer and VP, Quality

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

