What's happening in Alberta?

For the most current information impacting AHS staff, visit the COVID-19 Insite page. For current COVID-19 case counts, public health measures, travel requirements, guidance for businesses and more, visit alberta.ca/covid19.

Staff can also review the COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook which provides information and details to support staff as we move through the next phases of the pandemic.

Additional information for Allied Health Staff can be found here. We encourage all staff to review, as information in the Allied Health document may be useful to healthcare providers beyond that scope.

Other COVID-19 resources:
- Clinical characteristics of COVID-19
  - This includes a breakdown of what COVID-19 is, how it spreads and symptoms to watch out for.
- Clinical management of suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients
- Daily Fit for Work Screening
- Expedited Return to Work Process
- Health Care Aid Wage Supplement
- Infection, Prevention and Control for Healthcare Workers and Proper PPE
  - Outbreaks
  - Restrictions for Staff who Work at Multiple Sites
- Mass gatherings and physical distancing (at work and at home)
- Medical notes
- Mental Health
- Relaunch Strategy to Return to Normal Operations
- Isolation, testing for COVID-19 and contact tracing
- Staff redeployment
- Training
- Travel
- Vacation
- Virtual Care
- Visitor restrictions
- Volunteer restrictions
- Working remotely, parking and childcare
- COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout

The numbers listed below identify questions that are new or have been updated with additional information: 127, 185, 189.
Clinical characteristics of COVID-19

1. What is novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?
   - coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses cause respiratory illness in people, ranging from mild common colds to severe pneumonias. Others cause illness in animals only. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and more rarely, these can spread from person-to-person through close contact.
   - Novel coronaviruses are new strains of the virus that have not been previously identified in humans.
   - COVID-19 is the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, a new virus that was first recognized in December 2019.
   - Most people with mild illness of COVID-19 will recover on their own. Although there are no specific medications or proven treatments for COVID-19 at this time, supportive care is being used to treat people with COVID-19 and some medications are being tested to see if they help severely ill patients.
   - Review this section for more information about a COVID-19 vaccine in Alberta.

2. What are COVID-19 variants?
   - Like most viruses, COVID-19 mutates as it reproduces inside the cells of an infected person. COVID-19 viruses that have changed or mutated are called variants.
   - Recently, new variant COVID-19 strains were identified in the United Kingdom (B.1.1.7), South Africa (B.1.351) and Brazil (P.1). These strains are Variants of Concern because they appear to spread more easily than other strains.
   - Work is underway by the international scientific and public health communities to better understand the biological significance of these variant strains, including how the current vaccines may help protect against them.
   - For more information, see COVID-19 Variants.
   - See Alberta Health Isolation and Quarantine Requirements for information on testing, isolation/quarantine requirements and supports for variant cases, close contacts and household contacts.
   - Alberta is monitoring for variant strains of COVID-19 that have a higher infection rate. Current variant cases numbers can be found here, and are updated weekly.

3. How does COVID-19 spread?
   - COVID-19 is transmitted through tiny droplets of liquid produced by people who have the virus, and then spread from person-to-person by:
     - coughing, sneezing, talking, laughing, and singing
     - touching objects or surfaces the virus has landed on and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth (bath towels, kitchen utensils, door knobs, etc.)
   - People who have COVID-19 can spread it to others before they start to feel sick.
   - COVID-19 is not widely spread by being airborne, which means it doesn’t stay in the air long and won’t go very far. But if you are too close to someone with COVID-19 you can get sick by breathing in air that contains droplets with the virus.
     - Airborne transmission is not the dominant or common mode of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 (Public Health Ontario Review). Research on the extent and scale of airborne transmission mode is ongoing.
   - We think the virus generally only survives for a few hours on a surface or object, but it may be possible for it to survive several days under some conditions.

4. What is the incubation period of COVID-19?
   - Current estimates suggest the incubation period for COVID-19 is similar to other novel coronaviruses, between 1 and 14 days.

5. What are symptoms of COVID-19?
   - The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include:
     - Fever
     - A new cough or a chronic cough that is worsening
     - New or worsening shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

ahs.ca/covid
7. What should I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?

- If you are a healthcare worker in Alberta who is experiencing symptoms please:
  - Stay home and isolate – do not go to an ED or clinic.
  - Effective Oct. 20, COVID-19 testing is offered to Albertans in the groups listed below:
    - Albertans with symptoms of COVID-19
    - Albertans who are close contacts of a confirmed case, whether symptomatic or not
    - Albertans who are linked to a known outbreak, whether symptomatic or not
    - All healthcare workers who are symptomatic, are a close contact of a COVID-19 case or are linked to an outbreak will still receive testing.
    - Refer to [this question](#) to understand the new testing and isolation requirements for children and youth under the age of 18.
  - Testing is by appointment and can be booked [online](#) or by calling Health Link at 811.
- If you need immediate medical attention, call 911 and inform them you may have COVID-19.
- Review [COVID-19 self-care instructions](#) and [how to manage symptoms of COVID-19 at home](#).
• Refer this question for more information on when you are legally required to isolate.
• Review to this question to learn when your isolation is over, or this question to learn when you can return to work after testing positive.

8. If a person tested positive for COVID-19, and has now completed their mandatory isolation period, is it safe to be around them? How do we know they are safe to be around? Is there a risk that they could still be infectious?
• It is safe to be around a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, once they:
  o Isolate for 10 days from the start of their symptoms AND their symptoms have resolved; OR
  o Isolate for 10 days from the date they were tested AND they continue to have no symptoms, even if they tested positive for COVID-19 and had no symptoms to begin with.
• Children under 18 years of age do not need to isolate if they have only one of a runny nose or sore throat, but should stay home until well. Review to this question for more information.
• Current evidence indicates people with mild or moderate COVID-19 are no longer infectious by day 10 after symptom onset as long as their symptoms have resolved. Testing to see if a person is negative after they have tested positive for COVID-19 is not recommended or required at this time.
• Some people who have severe disease requiring hospitalization or admission to ICU, or who are immune compromised may be infectious for longer than 10 days. Their healthcare provider can provide advice about when they are no longer infectious.
• Review to this question to learn when your isolation is over. Check ahs.ca/isolation for more information on isolation requirements, testing options, symptoms and supports available.

9. Can herd immunity be effective to reduce the spread of COVID-19?
• Dr. Deena Hinshaw, the province’s Chief Medical Officer of Health, recently wrote a detailed response outlining the human toll and efficacy of pursuing a ‘herd immunity’ strategy. Dr. Hinshaw explains why herd immunity will lead to increased deaths and increased hospitalization, and points out it’s still unclear if COVID-19 infection confers long-lasting protection against future infections. “Herd immunity by natural infection is not a wise, or possibly even an achievable, goal to pursue,” she concludes.

10. What can I do to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at work, home or in my community?
• Adhere to the same practices we recommend for protecting against all respiratory illnesses:
  o Wash your hands using an alcohol-based rub or soap and warm water for at least twenty seconds. Review the AHS Hand Health FAQ.
  o Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
  o Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  o Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched.
  o When sick, cover your cough and sneezes with your arm, and then wash your hands.
  o Wear a non-medical mask in public when a distance of two metres cannot be easily maintained.
• Limit your public interactions and create physical distance of two metres when among others.
  o On December 8, the Government of Alberta made masking mandatory for all indoor public spaces, workplaces and places of worship. Review the website for more information.
  o AHS requires all healthcare workers providing direct patient care in both AHS and community settingsto wear a surgical/procedure mask, or a fit-tested and seal-checked N95 respirator continuously, as well as eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shield, or procedure mask with built-in eye shield), at all times when engaged in patient interactions that occur within two metres (2 m). This includes both hands-on patient care, as well as indirect patient care such as meal delivery and housekeeping.
  o Refer to the PPE FAQ for more information on the continuous use of eye protection.
  o All healthcare workers who cannot maintain adequate physical distancing (a minimum of two metres or six feet) from patients and co-workers are required to wear a surgical/procedure mask or a fit-tested and seal-checked N95 respirator, continuously. This includes non-clinical and administrative sites.
• DO NOT work when unwell, with any illness. If you have symptoms, please stay home, advise your leader/medical leader and get tested.
• Stay home with any cold or flu symptoms until feeling well.
  o Refer to this question to learn who is applicable for COVID-19 testing and how to stay safe.
11. Is there an app I can use to find out if I have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19?
   - The ABTraceTogether app, created by the Government of Alberta enhances current contact tracing processes and helps Albertans protect themselves and their loved ones.
   - Use of the app is voluntary: users opt-in to participate. Only your phone number is collected at the time of registering the app. The application does not track the user’s location and does not use your GPS. Data is only stored on the user’s phone in an encrypted format for 21 days. Users consent to sharing their data if they have tested positive for COVID-19. Users must be within two metres of each other, for a total duration of 15 minutes in a 24-hour period, in order to be notified as a close contact.
   - The app is available to download for free from the App Store and Google Play. More information about the app is available from the Government of Alberta. [here](https://www.alberta.ca/abtrace.html).
   - Read the FAQs about the ABTraceTogether app found on the Government of Alberta’s website.

12. I’m worried about catching COVID-19. Should I wear gloves when outside of my house or in public places?
   - Medical gloves are a very important component of Personal Protective Equipment for healthcare workers. However, gloves do not need to be worn by members of the general public during their daily activities, such as when grocery shopping.
   - Gloves can create a false sense of security. If not used and disposed of properly, wearing gloves may provide another surface for the virus to live on – potentially encouraging virus transmission.
   - Gloves are not a substitute for proper hand hygiene. We recommend frequent and thorough [hand washing](https://www.alberta.ca/hand-washing-manual) (with soap and water for 20 seconds), and covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing. Avoid touching your face, nose or mouth regardless of whether gloves are being worn. These remain the best evidence-based ways to prevent the spread of respiratory illness.
   - For those who choose to wear gloves, proper glove use must be practiced.
     - Hands should always be washed and/or sanitized prior to putting on gloves and after taking gloves off.
     - Gloves should be changed when they become soiled or torn.
     - Change gloves if you touch your face – eyes, nose or mouth – or cover a cough or sneeze with your hands while wearing gloves.
     - Disposable gloves should be thrown out and not used again once they have been taken off.
     - Reusable gloves must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

13. I use hand sanitizer regularly. What should I look for in products intended for personal use?
   - AHS does not individually verify or promote any of these products, but here’s some overarching advice on what to look for when considering hand sanitizer for your personal use:
     - Ensure the product has an alcohol concentration between 60-90 per cent. Public Health Agency of Canada, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization all agree that products in this range are effective.
     - The World Health Organization also recommends inclusion of hydrogen peroxide in the solution, to prevent bacterial spores forming in the container. This may be less important if you are using a small container rapidly, for personal use.
     - Always read the full list of ingredients, to ensure you identify any allergens or irritants to which you know you are sensitive. For example, some products include emollients, which help protect the skin, but may cause allergies in some individuals.
   - On Dec. 8, 2020, the Government of Alberta made masking mandatory for all indoor public spaces, workplaces and places of worship. Review the website for more information.
   - Wear a non-medical mask in public when a distance of two metres cannot be easily maintained.
   - Face coverings are another way to cover your mouth and nose to prevent respiratory droplets from contaminating other people or surfaces. Additionally, wearing a mask may stop you from touching your nose and mouth.
     - Ensure your mask is well-fitted and does not gape at the sides.
     - Be aware that masks can become contaminated on the outside. Avoid moving or adjusting the mask. Assume the mask has been contaminated and take proper precautions.
     - Critically, if you wear a mask, you must wash your hands before putting it on, as well as before and after taking it off.
     - Cloth masks should be worn only a short time, as there is some evidence that they can trap viruses and become damp, which may put the wearer at greater risk.
     - It is critical that used masks be carefully handled to avoid spreading infection to others.

15. I want to wear an N95 respirator when out in public. Do all brands provide equal protection?
   - Health Canada has received reports that fraudulent and uncertified N95 respirators that falsely claim to protect consumers against COVID-19 are being illegally sold to consumers online and in some stores.
   - In Canada, N95 respirators are regulated by Health Canada as Class I medical devices and are manufactured or imported by companies that hold a Medical Device Establishment License.

16. When is it okay to use a non-medical (cloth) mask versus a medical mask?
   - Please see the AHS Guidelines for Continuous Masking that outline requirements for continuous masking in healthcare settings and administrative settings.
   - Healthcare workers are required to wear eye protection and a surgical/procedure mask continuously, at all times and in all areas of their workplace if they are involved in direct patient contact or cannot maintain a minimum physical distance (of two metres or 6 feet) from patients and co-workers.
   - Workers who work in administrative areas with no direct patient contact or patient items are required to wear a mask continuously in all areas of their workplace where they cannot maintain adequate physical distancing. Workers in these areas can choose to wear their own non-medical (e.g. cloth) mask.

17. How do I care for and launder a cloth mask?
   - If you are going to wear a cloth mask at work, it is important to bring more than one with you so that you can change it if it becomes soiled or contaminated.
   - Store your mask after taking it off in a paper bag or sealed container. Plastic sealable bags are not always the best option as they may promote growth of microorganisms on the mask.
   - Always handle your mask by the ear loops and wash your hands before and after touching the mask.
   - Launder your mask every day in a hot water wash cycle as you would your work clothes. For more information refer to the Healthcare Attire Information Sheet.

18. Can I reuse my medical mask or cloth mask?
   - In a non-clinical setting, it is okay to put your mask upside down (outer side touching a clean surface) for reuse, or on a hook as long as it is not soiled or has become contaminated.
   - In a clinical setting, you should be changing and disposing of your medical mask when it is moist, soiled, or after coming into contact with patients on isolation precautions.

19. How can I prevent the spread in a clinical or acute care setting?
   - Review the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) webpage and additional resources such as:
     - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
     - Point of Care Risk Assessment
     - ILI algorithm to be followed when assessing patients who present with an influenza-like illness
     - IPC Recommendations for COVID-19
AHS requires all healthcare workers providing direct patient care in both AHS and community settings to wear a **surgical/procedure mask continuously** as well as eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shield, or procedure mask with built-in eye shield), at all times when engaged in patient interactions that occur within two metres (2 m). This includes both hands-on patient care, as well as indirect patient care such as meal delivery and housekeeping.

- Refer to the [PPE FAQ](https://ahs.ca/covid) for more information on the continuous use of eye protection.

All healthcare workers who cannot maintain adequate physical distancing (a minimum of two metres or six feet) from patients and co-workers are required to wear a **surgical/procedure mask continuously**. This includes non-clinical and administrative sites.

- Use [Routine Practices](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp) for all patients at all times and appropriate [Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp) as needed.

- Use [Contact and Droplet precautions](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp), when caring for a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, including a procedure mask, gown, eye protection and gloves. Note: N95 respirators and eye protection are used when performing [aerosol-generating medical procedures](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp) or when working with an intubated patient who has suspected or confirmed COVID-19. For more guidance on AGMPs, visit [www.ahs.ca/agmp](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp).

- Review the [PPE checklist](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp) and the proper procedures for **donning and doffing of PPE**.

AHS also has a [Provincial PPE Safety Coach Program](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp). The voluntary program trains staff to provide peer-to-peer support and on-site education of proper PPE selection and donning and doffing techniques, complementing existing programs, or as a standalone program in areas that do not currently have a PPE support program.

- For more information on becoming a PPE safety coach and training, visit [ahs.ca/ppesafetycoach](https://www.ahs.ca/ppesafetycoach).

### 20. I’m worried I may bring the virus home to my family. How can I ensure that I don’t?

- It is critical that staff are compliant with [AHS Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) standards](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp).

- AHS requires all healthcare workers who provide direct patient care to wear eye protection and a **surgical/procedure mask continuously**, Staff who do not come into contact with patients or who are unable to maintain physical distancing must wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously.

- The effective and appropriate use of PPE keeps staff uniforms and clothing clean. If scrubs are soiled, staff are directed to change out of them before leaving their place of work.

- Hair and shoe coverings are not required PPE. If hair coverings are worn for personal reasons; launder as per the [Healthcare Attire Information Sheet](https://www.ahs.ca/agmp).

  - Here are some additional recommendations:
    - Washable clothing is preferred in the healthcare setting. Regularly launder clothing in a hot water wash cycle followed by a cycle in the dryer. For more information refer to the Healthcare Attire Information Sheet.
    - Minimize contact between unprotected clothing and patient environments. For instance, do not lean up against walls, countertops, furniture, patient beds/cribs, or medical equipment.
    - Change your clothes at the end of a clinical day, either at the hospital or other facility, or once you arrive at home. If you change at work, transport the clothes you have changed out of into either a disposable plastic bag or a washable cloth bag that can be laundered at the same time as the clothes.

- Healthcare workers who are healthy and not experiencing symptoms can still share spaces with their family including bedrooms and bathrooms.

  - If you do become symptomatic, isolation is required.
  - Testing will be by appointment, which can be booked online by visiting [www.ahs.ca/covid](https://www.ahs.ca/covid). If using the Internet is not an option, 811 can book an appointment.

### 21. What surfaces should I clean at home to help reduce the possibility of transmission of the virus?

- We recommend regular cleaning of high touch surfaces. High touch surfaces are those touched often and most likely to be contaminated, such as:
  - Tabletops
  - Light switches
  - Door knobs
  - Sink taps
Clinical management of suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients

22. I eat at work. Is there guidance on how to be safe when bringing food in or when ordering take-out?
- This guidance document supports staff bringing food to AHS sites for personal consumption.
- While we discourage all Albertans from sharing food or beverages at this time, the guidance document also outlines steps to lower the risk if staff choose to share external food with one or more staff members.
- We continue to remind all staff not to accept donated food for personal consumption, or to distribute donated food to other AHS staff.

23. Are staff allowed to accept food donations from companies when working on site?
- In accordance with Infection Prevention and Control, AHS employees are currently unable to accept food donations.

24. Where can I find translated COVID-19 materials for patients and their families?
- AHS and the Government of Alberta have translated resources for COVID-19.
- Interpretation services are available 24/7 through 811 and language line. Use standard processes to access this service from the frontline.

25. Is there a place where I can share my thoughts on what has been working well during the COVID-19 response and could be used in the future?
- Send your ideas to BeyondCOVID@ahs.ca where they will be reviewed to see how we can adopt what we’ve learned into other areas of AHS.

26. How is COVID-19 diagnosed?
- A COVID-19 viral test (or COVID-19 nucleic acid test) is a way to find out if you have COVID-19. The test looks for the genetic material of the virus in cells from your nose or throat (breathing passages). This test is used to diagnose a current infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
- The test is most often done on a sample from your nose or throat. A sample is usually collected by putting a long swab into the back of your nose or throat.

27. What did the testing of asymptomatic Albertans reveal?
- Testing can only determine whether a person has COVID-19 at the time testing, even if they are asymptomatic. Tests cannot reliably determine whether someone has previously had COVID-19. They also cannot assess immunity to COVID-19.
- Despite widespread asymptomatic testing, we found the likelihood of having a positive test in those without known exposure or linked to an outbreak was extremely low. Only 0.07% of the more than 213,800 voluntary asymptomatic tests were positive.

ahs.ca/covid
28. Who is eligible for testing in Alberta?
   - Effective Oct. 20, COVID-19 testing is offered to Albertans in the groups listed below:
     - Albertans with symptoms of COVID-19
     - Albertans who are close contacts of a confirmed case, whether symptomatic or not
     - Albertans who are linked to a known outbreak, whether symptomatic or not
     - All healthcare workers who are symptomatic, are a close contact of a COVID-19 case or are linked to an outbreak will still receive testing.
     - Albertans who receive a positive result from a rapid COVID-19 Point of Care Test, through workplace or community asymptomatic screening.
     - Refer to this question for testing and isolation requirements for children and youth under the age of 18.
     - Testing is by appointment and can be booked online or by calling Health Link at 811.
   - Please note that adults with a cough, fever, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, runny nose, or sore throat not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition is legally required to isolate for 10 days from the start of symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer; however, these individuals ARE allowed to leave home to come for testing, following the guidance outlined in this Order.
   - Refer to this question if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
   - Review to this question to learn when your isolation is over.

29. Why did testing criteria in Alberta change?
   - COVID-19 testing criteria has changed in an effort to reduce wait times, speed up access to results for those at greatest risk of illness and to support the healthcare system in managing COVID-19 cases, potential exposures and outbreaks.
   - We continue to monitor the spread of COVID-19 and our testing strategy will be adapted as needed.

30. Is there an option for expedited testing? When is expedited testing appropriate?
   - Expedited testing with turnaround times less than six hours is a limited resource.
   - Please see the following guidance for clinicians and laboratory staff intended to clarify when expedited testing is most likely to have an impact on clinical management, resource utilization, and follow-up actions (such as rapid response activities to an outbreak).

31. Are there any research studies taking place related to COVID-19?
   - There are about 160 research studies related to COVID-19 underway in Alberta, or that have been recently completed. These range from clinical trials that test new medications, to studies that assess different types of personal protective equipment, to observational studies that focus on the various impacts of COVID-19 on patients and their families.
   - To find out more about clinical trials being conducted in Alberta, visit bethecure.ca, albertacancerclinicaltrials.ca and ahs.ca/participateresearch.

32. What patients are at highest risk for severe COVID-19?
   - Older individuals and people with medical co-morbidities, especially related to cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory illnesses, diabetes and hypertension appear to be at the highest risk.
   - Studies demonstrating these risk factors have not assessed the role of age as a confounder for these findings at this time, and the pathophysiology of these risk factors is still under investigation.
   - Progressive illness early after presentation may also be a predictor of a severe clinical course.
   - The proportion of individuals who get COVID-19 who develop severe disease is still under investigation, but is under 20 per cent of diagnosed cases.
   - Only a fraction of hospitalized patients will require ventilator support, develop shock, have signs of end-organ damage, or require critical care admission.
33. Where does the clinical guidance we receive about COVID-19 come from?

- AHS COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) is a standing committee which reviews emerging evidence and guidance from national and international bodies, regarding various facets of COVID-19.
- SAG Rapid Response Reports created from these reviews provide recommendations pertaining to COVID-19 and its impacts on patients, providers, community and the health system, with the goal of informing clinical and public health practice, and policy and procedure development.
- The recommendations are intended to be used in addition to clinical judgement.
- More information about SAG and its recommendations is available on the [COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group website](https://ahs.ca/covid), SAG recently release information on:
  - Clinical indicators of the need for intubation or mechanical ventilation
  - Predicting positive tests for COVID-19
  - Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) Safe in COVID-19
  - Safely Discharging COVID-19 Patients from Hospital
  - Risk factors for severe COVID-19 outcomes
  - Role of children in the transmission of COVID-19 in communities
- The full reports for these reviews and others are available on the [SAG Recommendations pages](https://ahs.ca/covid).

34. Is Ivermectin effective for the treatment and prevention of COVID-19?

- Following media reports suggesting Ivermectin could be effective for the treatment and prevention of COVID-19, the AHS Scientific Advisory Group conducted a review to explore the evidence around this drug.
- All studies included in the review were of low quality, meaning it is uncertain if Ivermectin is of any use in COVID-19 treatment or prevention and better quality studies are needed to determine whether Ivermectin is useful as treatment or prevention.
- Based on the [findings of this rapid review](https://ahs.ca/covid), at this time, Ivermectin should not be prescribed or taken to treat or prevent COVID-19 outside of a clinical trial.

35. Is there a resource on how to recognize early symptoms of COVID-19 in seniors?

- An [information poster](https://ahs.ca/covid) on how to recognize early symptoms of COVID-19 in seniors and clients in continuing care, congregate or home living is available. This visual aid includes important observations of behaviour, signs and symptoms, sudden changes, as well as information on reporting early symptoms or any other changes, to site leadership and a regulated healthcare provider.

36. Are there clinical indicators that predict the need for patient intubation and mechanical ventilation, and in those patients the probability of survival or mortality?

- The AHS COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group conducted a rapid review in response to questions from clinicians. This review is based on limited literature and existing published guideline documents, and is limited to adult, non-pregnant patients with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19. The [Rapid Review report](https://ahs.ca/covid) has several recommendations with regard to intubation.

37. I have a patient with serious acute illness. What steps should I take to support them in their care goals or end-of-life plans?

- It is important to have advance care planning and [goals of care discussions](https://ahs.ca/covid) with your clients and/or their alternate decision makers before and/or at the onset of serious acute illness.
- Providing goal-concordant care is especially important with severe symptoms and treatment for COVID-19. These conversations should include goals, hopes and fears ahead of sickness, as well as the potential need for hospitalization, ventilation or resuscitation, and [Goals of Care Designation orders](https://ahs.ca/covid).
- As appropriate, please visit or share the following online resources:
  - [Conversations Matter website](https://ahs.ca/covid) – AHS website for advance care planning and Goals of Care Designations for the public and for healthcare providers
  - [Conversations Matter Guidebook](https://ahs.ca/covid) – this resource outlines the steps in advance care planning and explains Goals of Care Designations in plain language
  - [Personal Directive](https://ahs.ca/covid) – A personal directive provides instruction for future medical care and identifies an agent to make personal decisions if needed.
38. I’m a physician – are there resources available to guide care decision-making during this pandemic?
   - AHS Clinical Ethics has created the Goals of Care Designations during Pandemic Conditions guidance document, intended to support decision-making during COVID-19.

39. I work in palliative and end-of-life care. What resources can I use when treating patients?
   - Several resources have been developed to guide healthcare providers on providing PEOLC to patients and families, including but not limited to those with COVID-19.
     - AHS COVID website with provincial PEOLC resources
     - Continuing Care Connection website
     - The Provincial PEOLC team has developed a PEOLC COVID-19 SharePoint site that is accessible to AHS and Covenant Health staff. If you would like to access this site, please email palliative.care@ahs.ca.
   - For more information on PEOLC, visit the Palliative Care webpages on MyHealth.Alberta.ca. This website is a reliable, clinically relevant and evidence-based accessible source of PEOLC interdisciplinary information for both healthcare providers and the public.
   - If you have questions or would like to connect with the provincial PEOLC team, please email palliative.care@ahs.ca.

40. I’ve been asked by a patient to witness the signing of wills or a personal directive. Where can I find guidance to deal with requests such as these?
   - This guidance document developed by AHS contains information on factors to consider if a patient requests a health care professional witness any of these personal documents, as well as the process for lawyers to access AHS sites to provide legal services to patients and clients.
   - The guidance document also contains links to important resources, including the Personal and Financial Decision Making Toolkit for Frontline Staff, for staff to consult when choosing to witness a personal directives, enduring powers of attorney or other personal document.
   - Find more on staying safe when supporting a patient to complete documentation in the Allied Health FAQ.

41. What guidelines should I follow when caring for hospitalized pediatric patients with COVID-19?
   - Guidelines are available to give Alberta providers of inpatient pediatric care guidance for the basic care of patients with known or suspected COVID-19 infection. This will help ensure these patients receive optimal, consistent and equitable care. Please review the guidance document to learn more.

42. I have a COVID-19 patient who has a secondary infection. What are the recommendations for antimicrobial use for these patients?
   - This review by the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) was requested to assess current data on the incidence of co-infections at presentation, or bacterial or fungal superinfection, to inform guidelines around antimicrobial use in patients with COVID-19.
   - Antibiotic use in patients with COVID-19 has not been proven to improve clinical outcomes, but unnecessary antibiotic use in the stewardship literature has been proven to be associated with an increased risk of C difficile, and other adverse drug effects. For more information, see the Rapid Review.

43. Is there an advice line for with patients/community members living with disabilities?
   - A Rehabilitation Advice Line, 1-833-379-0563, is available for Albertans over the age of 18 who are recovering from injury, orthopedic surgery, COVID-19, or managing a neurological condition.
   - The line gives callers information about:
     - Activities and exercises that help with physical concerns
     - Strategies to manage the day-to-day activities affected by these concerns
     - Rehabilitation services that are open for in-person and/or virtual visits
     - Community-based organizations

ahs.ca/covid
44. Where can I find additional guidance to support those living with severe disabilities?
- AHS has developed guidance related to unique infection prevention and control considerations for individuals living with severe disabilities, as well as a COVID-19 Communication Rights Toolkit, which provides resources and supports for people living with hearing/speech issues.
- The Rehabilitation Advice phone line can be reached at 1-833-379-0563, and other resources can be found at Resources for Specific Health Conditions.

45. Who should I call to facilitate a safe, timely transfer of patient during this pandemic?
- All providers in all zones are asked to use RAAPID when seeking time-sensitive referral/advice, patient transfer or accessing services of providers in another facility in Alberta.
- This summary outlines the types of calls that need to involve RAAPID and those that would be considered out of scope.
- Calling RAAPID early to identify the available destination recourse is paramount for initiating optimal care and response for urgent and high acuity patient transport.
  - North: 1-800-282-9911 | 780-735-0811
  - South: 1-800-661-1700 | 403-944-4486
- If you encounter any difficulties getting the level of service required, please ask to speak with the RAAPID manager on call. For less timely inquiries, email RAAPID.Leadership@ahs.ca.

46. What criteria for discharge should we follow for patients hospitalized with COVID-19?
- Common criteria for discharge for COVID-19 patients within guidelines from health organizations and health regions include:
  - afebrile status without use of fever-reducing agents for at least 48 hours
  - improving hypoxia and respiratory symptoms (particularly shortness of breath, since up to 29 per cent of patients may have persistent cough for up to three weeks)
  - able to adhere to isolation recommendations until predominant symptoms and fever are completely resolved.
- For more information, please review the recommendations section of the Rapid Review.

47. What guidance is available to support the discharge of a patient hospitalized with COVID-19?
- Guidance is available for acute care staff and physicians to support the consistent and safe discharge of COVID-19 patients, on the Insite table:
  - Provincial Pandemic Flowsheet
  - COVID-19 Safe Patient Discharge Checklist
  - Safe Patient Discharge Checklist Appendices
  - My Discharge Checklist (for patients)
  - Staff Script for the COVID-19: My Discharge Checklist
- A guideline is also available that defines how patients, primary care, public health, acute care, and home living and supportive living can work together to coordinate care to ensure patients have the support they need throughout their COVID-19 health journey – including their transition back home.

48. What resources are available for patients to manage COVID-19 symptoms?
- Refer to MyHealth Alberta:
  - How to manage symptoms
  - Care Instructions
Daily Fit for Work screening

49. How is AHS ensuring staff are well and without symptoms before coming to work?
   - To minimize the spread of COVID-19, daily fit for work screening is required for all staff, physicians, volunteers and contractors.
   - A separate questionnaire specific to non-continuing care staff working in a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak unit/area is available.
     - Specific screening for staff working at continuing care facilities (hospice, long term care, designated supportive living, or congregate living) must continue to meet requirements from the latest Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders.
   - Following the standards set out in the Fit for Work Screening Protocol, zones/sites will determine how screening will be completed before any staff member starting a shift for their fitness to work. This will be done through the completion of a questionnaire to assess symptoms and health risks.
   - Staff, physicians, volunteers or contractors who refuse to be screened will not be permitted to attend work as scheduled. For more information, see the Fit for Work Screening Protocol and ahs.ca/fitforwork.
   - You can use your AHS account login to access the online questionnaire tool.
     - To add the online tool to your home screen, go to ahs.ca/fitforwork on your mobile device, click the “Fit for Work Questionnaire” button to open the tool, log-in, then tap the menu icon in your browser and select Add to Home Screen. The tool will then appear as an icon or bookmark on your home screen. Note: You will still have to log-in every time you use the tool.
   - Specific screening questions for staff working at continuing care facilities (hospice, long-term care, designated supportive living or congregate living) have been updated to meet requirements from the latest Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders.
   - Information related to screening people visiting residents and patients is available at ahs.ca/visitation.

50. Do I need to complete a temperature check as part of the Daily Fit for Work screening?
   - Temperature checks are required in continuing care (long term care, designated supportive living and congregate living) facilities for all staff and essential visitors in accordance with Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders.
   - For non-continuing care workplaces, temperature checks are not required as part of the Fit for Work screening process.
   - Data shows that the symptom of fever is present in only about 50 per cent of COVID-19 cases. Temperature checks also introduce additional contact risks.

51. I noticed a co-worker with symptoms at work. What should I do?
   - We all have a shared responsibility to keep our workplace safe, so speak up if you think someone is coming to work sick. Learn more in the How to Address a Workplace Concern and How to Stay Safe and Be Respectful resources.

Expedited Return to Work process

52. I’ve tested positive for COVID-19. When can I return to work?
   - Effectively immediately, healthcare workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 will be able to return to work 10 days after the onset of their symptoms or once their symptoms have resolved, whichever is longer.
   - Staff who are asymptomatic can return to work 10 days after the date of the positive test.
     - Expedited returns to work will only be considered in exceptional circumstance and must be discussed with your leader and approved by Zone Emergency Operation Centres.
     - Patient and staff safety will be the deciding factor in any approval. You can learn more in the FAQs.
   - Review the Return to Work Decision Chart and Return to Work Guide.
53. What are the conditions for a staff member returning to work after isolation?

- Refer to the Return to Work Guide for more support. Any staff who are approved for an expedited return to work will be required to follow strict conditions, including:
  - Donning a procedural mask at all times
  - Practicing physical distancing where possible, including while eating
  - Monitoring any change in symptoms, including having their temperature checked before each shift and completing a symptom checklist daily
  - Closely following all Infection, Prevention and Control protocols as well as other steps to ensure the safety of patients, families, and other staff.
- Alberta Health has removed the requirement for laboratory tests to confirm that someone has cleared a COVID-19 infection.

**Health Care Aid Wage Supplement**

54. Who does the Health Care Aid wage supplement apply to?

- On April 20, 2020, the Government of Alberta announced increased funding to help with pressures in contracted continuing care facilities, including a wage supplement for health care aides at contracted sites. The additional pay is to support hiring of additional staff at these continuing care sites.
- At this time, the wage supplement only applies to health care aides who work at contracted long term care and designated supportive living sites and does not apply to health care aides who work for AHS, Covenant Health, Carewest or Capital Care. It also does not apply to other healthcare worker roles.

**Infection Prevention and Control for Healthcare Workers and Proper PPE**

AHS’ PPE Task Force consolidates best practice guidelines and information on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Infection, Prevention & Control (IPC) guidelines. Visit ahs.ca/covidPPE to access all PPE and IPC guidelines. Questions? Email ppe@ahs.ca.

**Updated Agreement with Unions on Personal Protective Equipment during COVID-19**

The current PPE standard is contact and droplet precautions for non-AGMP scenarios. As a result of the Feb. 25, 2021 updated joint agreement, all healthcare workers regardless of classification, across the care continuum and in all clinical settings, who are within two metres of patients suspected, presumed or confirmed to have COVID-19 shall have access to requested PPE. Workers will have access to a fit-tested and seal-checked N95 or equivalent respirator if required based upon their own point of care risk assessment (PCRA), even in non-AGMP situations. For non-clinical workers who are required to be within two metres of a patient and who do not conduct a PCRA, access to the PPE will be based on their assessment of all known and foreseeable risks and hazards.

The updated joint agreement provides further clarity and empowers health care workers to make decisions on the appropriate PPE based on risk assessments and reinforces Infection Prevention and Control and PPE protocols.

55. What precautions should I take when treating all patients?

- AHS requires all healthcare workers providing direct patient care in both AHS and community settings to wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously as well as eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shield, or procedure mask with built-in eye shield) at all times when engaged in patient interactions that occur within two metres (2 m). This includes both hands-on patient care, as well as indirect patient care such as meal delivery and housekeeping.
  - Refer to the PPE FAQ for more information on the continuous use of eye protection.
- All healthcare workers who cannot maintain adequate physical distancing (a minimum of two metres or
6. Should I preform COVID-19 testing on an asymptomatic patient before treating them or before accepting a patient who is being transferred from another site?

- It’s not necessary to perform COVID-19 testing on an asymptomatic patient before providing routine, urgent, or emergent health services, or before accepting a patient who is being transferred from another site. The following outlines the rationale behind this guidance:
  1. Prevalence of COVID-19 in the general asymptomatic patient is relatively low.
  2. If testing were provided, the burden of virus may be below the detectable threshold at the time of collection, but could increase above the detectable threshold when the health service is provided, which could lead to a false negative. This false negative could lead to less adherence to precautions and proper use of PPE in the event that symptoms develop.
  3. Delaying health services while awaiting a swab result may result in unnecessary morbidity or mortality, without adding value to the decision-making process.

- This approach ensures patients receive the care they need when they need it. For more information, please visit ahs.ca/covid.

57. What type of precaution should I use when treating a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?

- All healthcare workers should complete a PCRA before providing care as per the joint statement.
- They are advised to use Contact and Droplet precautions in addition to routine practices when caring for a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, including a procedure mask, gown, gloves and eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shield, or procedure mask with built-in eye shield).
  - Note: personal eyeglasses are not sufficient eye protection.
- Workers will have access to a fit-tested and seal-checked N95 or equivalent respirator if required based upon their own point of care risk assessment (PCRA), even in non-AGMP situations.
- It is critical that staff refer to and comply with the AHS Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) standards when treating patients. These standards outline the circumstances and situations where personal protective equipment is required and appropriate in response to COVID-19.
- Review the PPE checklist for contact and droplet precautions and the proper procedures for donning and doffing procedures.
- These guidelines are in alignment with the joint agreement and with both the Public Health Agency of Canada and the World Health Organization, and with other provinces and territories in Canada.

58. What initial steps should I take with a patient that may have COVID-19?

Note: all healthcare workers are required to wear eye protection and a surgical/procedure mask continuously when treating any patient regardless of their COVID-19 status.

- Healthcare workers should complete a PCRA before providing care as per the joint statement.
- If your patient meets the higher risk screening criteria for COVID-19, have the patient wear a procedure mask immediately.
- Initiate contact and droplet precautions, place the patient in a separate room as soon as possible then proceed with your clinical assessment.
- Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH) approval is not required for specimen collection.
- A deeper nasopharyngeal (NP) swab collected under droplet and contact precautions and transported in viral transport medium OR a throat swab in a tube of sterile saline should be submitted.
  - Note: universal transport medium and NP swabs will continue to be preferentially distributed to bone marrow transplant, solid organ transplant, hematology/oncology, and critical care wards. Polyester and cotton-tipped throat swabs with tubes of sterile saline will be distributed for COVID-19 and respiratory pathogen panel (RPP) testing.
  - COVID-19 specimens no longer need to be shipped according to Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) Category B requirements. For additional concerns, contact the ProvLab Virologist on-call (VOC):
    - Edmonton (780-407-8921)

ahs.ca/covid
59. Which swabs are the correct ones to use for COVID-19 testing, and where do we find instructions on correct method for sample collection? Why are we using alternate collection devices to collect nasal and throat samples?

- Swabbing the deeper nasopharyngeal (NP) or the throat will now be the recommended standard, not the nose.
- Effective immediately, polyester and cotton-tipped throat swabs with tubes of sterile saline will be distributed for COVID-19 and respiratory pathogen panel (RPP) testing.
- Review the lab bulletins page for the most up-to-date info on swabs and required processes.
  - When collecting an NP swab from a patient on a bone marrow transplant, solid organ transplant, hematology/oncology, and critical care ward use a FLOQSwab® and Universal Transport Medium to collect a normal nasopharyngeal swab
    - Directions for use of a FLOQSwab® and Universal Transport Medium - red top tube with pink fluid
  - Use nasopharyngeal or throat swabs distributed for COVID-19 testing.
    - APTIMA Collection Kits/Swabs and COPAN ESwatTM Collection Kits/Swabs are to be discontinued for COVID-19 testing.
- Use the COVID-19 requisition available within your site’s clinical information system if available.
  - COVID-19 test requests can also be made by submitting respiratory specimens with the Serology and Molecular Testing Requisition and writing “COVID-19” in the bottom box (Specify Other Serology and Molecular Tests).
  - If your patient requires admission to hospital, or if you would like the Zone MOH to assist with the risk assessment, call the Zone MOH.
  - All patients who are symptomatic but are not hospitalized should be advised to isolate. They should not visit any other healthcare facilities, including outpatient imaging or labs, unless they are being admitted to hospital. Isolation information can be found here.

60. I collect COVID-19 using throat swabs. Is there an instructional resource I can use to ensure I am performing the collection and transportation properly?

- The instruction sheet and short demonstration video show how to ensure samples collected on throat swabs are fully contained within saline transport tubes and properly sealed for safe transport to the lab.
- The throat swabs used for sample collection do not have a designed ‘break-point’. This can make detachment of the sample for transport a bit tricky. The video will show how you can cut or break off the swabs to ensure the swab is fully contained within the transport tube.

61. Should staff with certain conditions avoid providing care to suspected/confirmed case of COVID-19?

- Healthcare workers who have underlying medical conditions and potential risk factors for severe COVID-19 disease, or are pregnant, may be concerned about their personal risk with respect to COVID-19,
- AHS has released the following position statements for general guidance:
  - Healthcare Workers with Underlying Medical Conditions and Potential Risk Factors for Severe COVID-19 Disease
  - Pregnant Healthcare Workers and COVID-19

62. Should staff providing care to a suspected/confirmed case of COVID-19 be restricted from providing care to other patients?

- Cohorting patients will provide the best protection for our patients and staff and will help preserve personal protective equipment. All decisions to cohort patients will be done in consultation with Infection
63. How is cohorting being determined by site?
- Based on site-specific capacity, facility design, and patient population, each site developed its own cohorting plan, using the following guiding principles and considerations:
  - The decision to cohort must be made in consultation with IPC.
  - A staged approach to cohorting is based on minimizing risk to the most patients while adhering to IPC principles and practices.
  - Strict adherence to IPC point-of-care risk assessment, hand hygiene, appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE), donning and doffing by healthcare providers, adequate spatial separation and appropriate cleaning and disinfection is required.
  - When cohorting patients, consideration should also be given to:
    - underlying patient conditions (e.g., immune-compromised);
    - vaccination status, especially for influenza with respect to co-infection;
    - Co-infection with other diseases (e.g., influenza).
- AHS is not considering dedicated COVID-19 hospitals due to the downstream impact to specialty care services and geographic considerations, including transport concerns, needing confirmed test results of individuals as COVID-19 positive versus having influenza-like-illness, and needing to maximize bed capacity across all sites.

64. When should I use an N95 respirator when treating a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?
- All healthcare workers should complete a PCRA before providing care as per the joint statement.
- When treating any patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, our healthcare workers are required to wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously as well as eye protection unless they are performing certain procedures that are considered aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMP) or when working with any intubated patients.
- A fit-tested N95 respirator should always replace a surgical/procedure mask in addition to gloves, gown, and eye protection for anyone in the room when an aerosol-generating medical procedure (AGMP) is performed for patients with COVID-19, suspected COVID-19, ILI or any new or changing respiratory illness or diarrhea.
- You can learn more about when N95 respirators should be used in this guidance document for personal protective equipment (PPE). For more guidance on AGMPs, visit www.ahs.ca/agmp.

65. I haven’t been fit tested for an N95 respirator. What should I do?
- Not all workers require the protection of an N95 respirator. To learn more about when to use an N95 respirator in your frontline work, visit www.ahs.ca/covidppe.
- Workers will have access to an N95 or equivalent respirator if required based upon their own point of care risk assessment (PCRA), even in non-AGMP situations. For non-clinical workers who are required to be within two metres of a patient and who do not conduct a PCRA, access to the PPE will be based on their assessment of all known and foreseeable risks and hazards.
- If required, contact your site/department Respiratory Fit Test Designate or your local WHS Advisor to be fit tested to one of the current models available. See the Respiratory Protection InSite page for contact information and more.
  - After being fit tested to an N95 respirator, please ensure your manager is aware of the model you have been fitted to.
- If you are a community partner who works in a non-AHS setting, please reach out to any organization that offers safety training to receive N95 respirator fit testing for you or your staff.

66. I was successfully fit tested for one N95 respirator model, and recently re-fit tested for another model. Both models are on my area’s supply cart. Can I wear both?
- No. Staff must only wear the make and model of N95 respirator that they have most recently been fit tested for and use only that model.
- Additional and frequent use of N95 respirators may require staff to transition to a different model but with the same trusted protection.
67. Why is an N95 respirator not required for Nasopharyngeal Swab?
- According to the Public Health Agency of Canada guideline, a Nasopharyngeal Swab does not generate aerosols that can lead to transmission. As the swabs do not generate aerosol, the PPE requirements within Contact and Droplet precautions are appropriate.
- This position has been adopted by all health jurisdictions in Canada and a recent decision by Alberta Labour and Occupational Health and Safety supported the AHS stance that an NP swab is not an AGMP. For more guidance on which procedures constitute an AGMP, visit www.ahs.ca/agmp.
- Note: Workers will have access to a fit-tested and seal-checked N95 or equivalent respirator if required based upon their own point of care risk assessment (PCRA), even in non-AGMP situations.

68. How can I find out if the procedure I’m performing is considered to be aerosol-generating?
- Review the online tool available at ahs.ca/AGMP to support the decision-making process around Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures (AGMPs), and related PPE requirements.
- The tool includes a list of all procedures currently considered AGMPs and provides links to related guidance which reflects current evidence. Questions? Email ppe@ahs.ca.
- Learn more about the difference between droplets, airborne particles and particles generated by an AGMP in the Allied Health FAQ.

69. Do I need to wear an N95 respirator when completing manual chest compressions on a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?
- AHS has completed a thorough review regarding the need for N95 respirator use by healthcare workers completing manual (hands-only) chest compressions.
- This review has determined that an N95 respirator is not required to initiate hands-only chest compressions on a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- Healthcare workers completing manual chest compressions are directed to continue to wear recommended PPE in alignment with our continuous masking directive, the point of care risk assessment, with the addition of Contact and Droplet precautions for patients with known or possible COVID-19. Workers will have access to a fit-tested and seal-checked N95 or equivalent respirator if required based upon their own point of care risk assessment (PCRA), even in non-AGMP situations.
- Healthcare workers responding to a cardio-respiratory arrest should:
  - call for help
  - place loose clothing/sheet over the mouth and nose of the patient, as airway source control while awaiting help; and,
  - initiate hands-only chest compressions, until you are relieved by individuals who are wearing PPE including fit-tested N95 respirators.
  - Only these relief individuals, wearing N95 respirators, should manage the airway and complete full CPR.
- This approach will allow staff to safely complete manual chest compressions on a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 while they await help from support teams who will have the time to don all PPE necessary to safely manage the airway, as well as chest compressions.
- Hands-only chest compressions are different than Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Fit-tested N95 respirators continue to be required for full CPR that includes management of the airway.

70. Where can I find out more information regarding the reprocessing of N95 respirators?
- Review the Reprocessing of N95 Respirators in the PPE FAQ for details regarding the collection, preservation and processing of N95 respirators.

71. I work in a position that that puts me within 2 metres/6 feet of my colleagues. Do I need to wear PPE?
AHS requires all healthcare workers providing direct patient care in both AHS and community settings to wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously as well as eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shield, or procedure mask with built-in eye shield), at all times when engaged in patient interactions that occur within two metres (2 m). This includes both hands-on patient care, as well as indirect patient care such as meal delivery and housekeeping.
All healthcare workers who cannot maintain adequate physical distancing (a minimum of two metres or six feet) from patients and co-workers are required to wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously. This includes administrative and corporate settings. Workers in these areas can choose to wear their own non-medical (e.g. cloth) mask.
• Review the Guidelines for Continuous Masking in Home Care and Congregate Living Settings.
• Additional guidance about this approach is available on www.ahs.ca/covidppe.

72. Along with continuous eye protection and masking, what other preventative measures should I follow to stay safe?
• Wear appropriate PPE at all times. This varies depending on the precautions for each patient. Don and doff your PPE appropriately.
• When physical distancing is not possible, such as in staff common areas, masks help prevent transmission. This means that if you need to remove your mask to eat or drink, and there isn’t room to social distance, you must find another location.
• Ensure all patients are masked when leaving their inpatient unit to attend services within other areas of the hospital. They should first perform hand hygiene before donning a mask.
• Complete your daily fit for work screening. Do not come to work sick.
• Practice frequent hand hygiene.

73. I’m experiencing some discomfort wearing a mask continuously. Is there guidance that can help?
• To help manage the impact of continuous masking, this video and a new support document has been created which outlines tips and guidance to improve your comfort with continuous masking, found here.

74. I use a mask extender to ease the strain of the typical mask strap on my ears. What are some tips for the safe and effective use of a mask extender?
• Review the PPE Task Force Mask Extender Survey Results and find more information on continuous masking on the PPE page.
• Watch this video, or review these tips the most safe and effective use of an extender:
  o Don and doff your mask extender properly to avoid self-contamination.
  o Wash your hands both before you don and before you doff your mask extender with your mask. Many of the types currently in use are difficult to clean, which means the virus may remain on the surface. Touching your face after touching the mask extender may increase the risk of self-contamination with the virus.
  o Disinfect/clean your mask extender right after taking off your mask. If this is not possible, then you should discard that mask extender, and use a clean/new mask extender when putting on a new mask.
  o Mask extenders must NOT be used with N95 respirators, as they may impact the fit and seal.

75. Is there a maximum time a procedure mask should be worn before it is changed to ensure it remains effective?
• The surgical/procedure mask should be immediately changed and safely disposed of whenever it is soiled or wet, whenever the healthcare worker feels it may have become contaminated and after care for any patient on Contact and Droplet Precautions (i.e. suspected/confirmed influenza-like illness or COVID-19).

76. Do patients, their families, designated support persons and visitor need to wear a mask?
• We require all patients and visitors to be masked when leaving any inpatient room to move to other areas in the facility. Masks must cover the nose and mouth.
• No patient shall be denied service in AHS because they cannot or will not wear a mask; however, in exceptional circumstances, non-urgent or routine care may be deferred or handled virtually when individuals refuse to mask and safe accommodations cannot be made to provide such care.
• The AHS Directive on Use of Masks During COVID-19 offers strategies to manage mask refusal, including:
  o Offering virtual care to adult outpatients requiring or awaiting routine care who are unable or refuse to mask.
  o When it may be appropriate for a non-urgent/non-emergent adult outpatient who refuses to mask to be asked to leave an AHS facility/setting.
  o Working collaboratively with designated support persons and families/visitors to find the most appropriate and safest solution for the situation, as per the AHS How to Support Mask Wearing: COVID-19 Worker Supports.
  o Means of enforcing compliance with families or visitors, including last-resort escalation at the discretion of the site leader or designate to removal from an AHS facility, and engaging the support of Protective Services (if on-site) or local police (if appropriate), as necessary.

www.ahs.ca/covidppe
77. What face masks should EMS staff use?
- Paramedics should use an N95 respirator. Doing so will support paramedics to have the proper protection in an enclosed environment that is unpredictable in nature.

78. I wear scrubs at work. Can I have scrubs issued to me during the pandemic?
- Linen Services will provide AHS-issued attire (scrubs) to staff on COVID-19 designated units who provide direct patient care. Staff and physicians in a designated COVID-19 unit, wearing AHS-issued attire are still required to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Contact and Droplet precautions.
- Please see the Healthcare Attire Information Sheet for details.

79. How can I reduce the risk of self-contamination/transmission of COVID from personal items/clothing?
- PPE, including scrubs, are worn to protect clothing from contamination. By protecting yourself and using your PPE properly at work, you’re also protecting your family members and loved ones.
- Hair and shoe coverings are not required PPE. If hair coverings are worn for personal reasons; launder as per the Healthcare Attire Information Sheet.
  - Washable clothing is preferred in the healthcare setting. Regularly launder clothing in a hot water wash cycle followed by a cycle in the dryer. For more information refer to the Healthcare Attire Information Sheet.
  - Minimize contact between unprotected clothing and patient environments. For instance, do not lean up against walls, countertops, furniture, patient beds/cribs, or medical equipment.
  - Change your clothes at the end of a clinical day, either at the hospital or other facility, or once you arrive at home. If you change at work, transport the clothes you have changed out of into either a disposable plastic bag or a washable cloth bag.
- Check this page for PPE information or find more information for personal items and clothing, found here.

80. I’ve seen different coloured isolation gowns. Do they provide the same level of protection?
- There are different ratings for isolation gowns, with several standards of performance, including fluid resistance.
  - Level 1 rated gowns are moderately fluid resistant, while a level 2 or 3 gown provides increased fluid resistance.
  - The reusable gowns being used in AHS are level 2 rated gowns and are suitable for isolation precautions.
  - Both reusable and disposable gowns are safe and effective PPE.
- Level 2 disposable isolation gowns are absolutely safe for use with COVID-19 positive patients or suspected cases, and for all types of interactions.

81. I understand we have different hand sanitizer. Is it safe?
- Health Canada has approved the use of technical-grade ethanol in the manufacturing of some hand sanitizer products, in place of pharmaceutical-grade ethanol.
- With this change, Health Canada has released a new risk assessment, as well as new labelling requirements. This will impact Microsan-brand hand sanitizer products used in AHS facilities.
- We have confirmed that the risk of technical-grade ethanol is very low though staff may notice a stronger or different odour associated with the products manufactured with technical-grade ethanol.
- The FAQ provides additional information and outlines Health Canada’s new assessment and related interpretation for human health.
- If you want to reduce your use of the hand sanitizer products, we suggest you replace use of hand sanitizer with warm water and soap.
- AHS recently assessed the degree of exposure to acetaldehyde when using hand sanitizer containing technical-grade ethanol. For more information, please see the full assessment report and a discussion document that reviews acetaldehyde exposure from the use of hand sanitizer.
- For ongoing updates, visit ahs.ca/handsanitizer.

82. Will hand sanitizer products that use technical-grade ethanol be labelled?
- AHS has implemented labelling on all impacted bottles of hand sanitizer and posters located near all dispensers to identify any product that contains technical-grade ethanol.
- Areas that are using technical-grade hand sanitizer will have labels applied to the dispensers. Areas that are using pharmaceutical grade hand sanitizer do not have labels. As technical grade hand sanitizer is
replaced by pharmaceutical grade hand sanitizer, labels will also be removed.

- Questions? Please contact PPE@ahs.ca.

83. Are the different disinfectant wipe products as safe and effective?
- Access to our usual ready-to-use (RTU) disinfectant wipes and RTU liquid product formulations for surface disinfectant supplies may vary during the pandemic; however, all AHS provided product substitutions are confirmed to be effective for COVID-19.

84. Are there tips to guide which type of ready-to-use disinfectant wipes I should use?
- RTU disinfectant wipes and dry wipes provided with RTU liquid disinfectants are most appropriate for cleaning and disinfecting non-critical medical devices, non-medical items such as electronic devices and some environmental cleaning tasks where a quick turn-around-time is required, e.g., bed and immediate patient environment after discharge.
- Depending on availability, dry wipes provided with RTU liquid disinfectants may be used for cleaning and disinfecting environmental surfaces. For more information, refer to resources available on our Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) External Website, Equipment Cleaning, Disinfection and Storage tab, such as Principles of Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection.
- As recommended in the Cleaning and Disinfection during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Addressing Disinfectant Supply Challenges, if RTU disinfectants are not available, are not appropriate for the task, or the manufacturer's instructions are not available, consult with the CPSM site supervisor.

85. Who do I contact with questions about PPE requirements and/or supply ordering processes?
- AHS staff, physicians and partners are encouraged to email their questions on PPE to PPE@ahs.ca.
- Please note that while this email address doesn’t replace the guidelines and advice already available at ahca/covid, it is another route for you to ask further questions.
- Staff may also refer questions to the PPE safety coach on their shift or in their unit.

If you are a frontline AHS staff member or leader –
- PPE requests should be directed to your Contract, Procurement and Supply Management contact. Please refer to ahc/acovidppe for more information.
- Leaders with questions regarding supply ordering processes or physicians working in AHS or contracted facilities, should submit them via email to AHS Contracting, Procurement & Supply Management (CPSM) at CPSMOperations.EOC@albertahealthservices.ca.

If you are an AHS staff member or leader working at a non-clinical site
- Sites and facilities that do not provide direct patient and client care can order PPE through the COVID-19 PPE Inventory Requisition, available on insite.ahs.ca/orderppe.
- For more information about PPE guidelines, refer to the COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook.

If you are an AHS-operated or contracted care providers, please note that:
- PPE supply, including the delivery of masks every two weeks, will continue to be distributed as usual for the following groups:
  - Long term care facilities, designated supportive living facilities and home care services, which are operated or contracted by Alberta Health Services; and
  - Publicly funded lodges, mental health housing, residential addiction treatment facilities, and shelter operators.
- For these groups listed above, requests for additional PPE including N95 respirators for use by staff performing an AGMP must be submitted to CPSMOperations.EOC@ahs.ca.
- Refer to the Continuing Care PPE FAQ for more information.

If you are a non-contracted provider, please note:
- Non-contracted providers (i.e. private lodges, private retirement communities, private assisted/supportive living, group homes, senior’s apartments and private home care) are required to order PPE supplies from their own suppliers. There are two platforms that can help connect providers with suppliers; however AHS does not endorse any particular vendor nor is it
responsible for the product or prices offered on either site. The platforms are:

- **Rapid Response Platform Canada**
- **ATB Nexus**

- Refer to the [Continuing Care PPE FAQ](#) for more information.

- If you’re unsure which category you fall into and need more support, please email ppe@ahs.ca.

- **NOTE:** Business and non-Alberta Health Services (AHS) organizations will be required to access PPE directly through suppliers. Information on PPE suppliers is available on [Alberta Biz Connect](#). For more information, visit the [Alberta Emergency Management Agency webpage](#).

### 86. Are there concerns about medication supplies?

- Pharmacy Services is actively monitoring the supply of medications used in intubated patients, including:
  - Cisatracurium
  - Ketamine
  - Midazolam
  - Propofol
  - Fentanyl
  - Rocuronium
  - Hydromorphone
  - Dexamethasone
  - Norepinephrine
  - Vasopressin

- We ask for your awareness and support as we look at ways to conserve medications used for intubated patients

- More details about conserving these important medications can be found [here](#).

### 87. Have cleaning standards changed in response to COVID-19?

- Cleaning and disinfection is a shared responsibility by both healthcare workers and Environmental Services teams. We ask that routine practices include the cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, especially high-touch surfaces, to reduce the spread of infection.

- Managers should consider assigning designated staff to complete enhanced environmental cleaning. Staff performing cleaning duties are to follow all cleaning process and principles:
  - [IPC Best Practice Guidelines | Equipment Cleaning, Disinfection & Storage](#)
  - [Environmental Services Policy and Practice Documents](#)

- More details about enhanced environmental cleaning can be found [here](#).

### 88. Are labs moving to appointment-only services for outpatient lab work in response to COVID-19?

- Effective May 4, 2020, all rural hospital and urgent care outpatient labs as well as most other lab sites will temporarily move to appointment-only service for outpatient lab work.

### Outbreaks

The Chief Medical Officer of Health has put in place orders restricting staff in Long Term Care (LTC), Designated Supportive Living (DSL), hospices, lodges and other supportive living facilities. Review the [Staff FAQ on Single Site, Confirmed Outbreak and Exclusion Orders](#) to find more information on how these orders impact staff who work at these facilities with a confirmed outbreak of COVID-19 and/or a COVID-19 Variant of Concern (VOC).

In addition, the Government of Alberta is posting online the location and facility name of active outbreaks in the province. The outbreaks being posted are at any sites where there have been two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19. The information can be found at [alberta.ca/covid19](#).

### 89. When are care sites required to report an outbreak?

- All congregate care sites in the province are required to report to public health if they have even one resident or staff member with any COVID symptoms.
90. What is the protocol if an outbreak occurs in an AHS facility? Who do we contact?
- AHS has created a Coordinated COVID-19 Response team, made up of zone operations, Infection Prevention and Control, Medical Officer of Health, Public Health Nursing, and Safe Health Environments, to support any site that is experiencing an outbreak.
- This team will provide resources support to outbreak management teams in an aim to reduce and contain viral spread as quickly as possible.
- A 1-800 number is available for sites to report a resident or staff member who has symptoms of influenza-like illness and facilitate immediate notification to all appropriate zone and provincial resources, to initiate:
  - Site support for implementation of outbreak management and control measures, including isolation protocols, staffing, PPE and education
  - Communications support
  - Affected resident or staff member testing and assessment
  - Rapid tracing and testing of close contacts, where required
  - Further follow-up on lab test results
  - Access to additional consultative expertise

91. Are staff allowed to work at multiple facilities if there is a confirmed outbreak at one of the sites they work at?
- Yes, but not at any other Long Term Care (LTC), Designated Supportive Living (DSL), lodge, hospice or residential treatment services facility.
- Note: there are several positions that are exempted from this order and are permitted to continue working in multiple LTC, DSL, lodge, hospice, or residential treatment services facilities with a confirmed outbreak.
  - Note: exempt staff who work at multiple LTC, DSL, Lodge or residential treatment facilities are required to immediately inform their supervisors if they have worked at, or are working at, a facility where there is a confirmed or suspected case.
  - Review the Staff FAQ on Single Site, Confirmed Outbreak and Exclusion Orders for more on how the various Chief Medical Officer of Health orders impact staff who work at a LTC/DSL, lodge or hospice facility with a confirmed outbreak.

92. I work in a continuing care facility. What’s the protocol to test patients/staff if an outbreak occurs?
- In these facilities, anyone with the mildest symptoms — such as a hoarse throat or muscle aches — must immediately be isolated and tested for COVID-19.
- Once either a resident or staff member tests positive and has a confirmed case of COVID-19 in any continuing care, or licensed supportive living setting, including lodges, designated supportive living or long-term care sites, there is a requirement to swab all asymptomatic residents for COVID-19 on the affected unit(s).
- Resources are available on the Continuing Care Connection site and ahs.ca/covid.
  - If a swab is positive, contact and droplet isolation is required in providing care for those residents.
  - For residents whose swabs are negative, enhanced monitoring for development of symptoms is recommended.
  - Staff can book an appointment to receive a PCR test for COVID-19 at ahs.ca/covid and, if their swabs are negative can return to work and do not need to isolate. Refer to return to work guidance for healthcare workers and the return to work decision chart.
  - Further swabs at a frequency determined by the MOH will also typically be required.
  - Review the Staff FAQ on Single Site, Confirmed Outbreak and Exclusion Orders to find more information on how the various Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders impact staff who work at a Long Term Care (LTC) or a Designated Supportive Living (DSL) facility with a confirmed outbreak.

93. When is an outbreak declared over?
- As per CMOH Order 03-2021, an outbreak may be declared over after 28 days (two incubation periods) from date of onset of symptoms (or test date if asymptomatic) in the last case, with the following exception:
  - If a staff member is the only confirmed case at the outbreak facility, the outbreak can be declared over after 14 days from their last day they attended the facility.
94. Where can I find information about an outbreak in an acute care setting?
- AHS has a webpage that includes confirmed COVID-19 cases in patients and healthcare workers from active outbreaks in acute care settings across the province, available here.

Restraictions for Staff who Work at Multiple Sites

On April 10, the Chief Medical Officer of Health put in place an order on single site employment for Long Term Care and Designated Supportive Living (LTC/DSL) sites. This order mandates that all staff who work in a LTC or DSL facility will be required to work at only one LTC or DSL facility for the duration of the pandemic.

For more information, please see the Staff FAQ on Single Site, Confirmed Outbreak and Exclusion Orders.

95. Will I be impacted by the single site order?
- On April 10, Alberta’s Chief Medical Officer of Health put in place an order on single site employment for Long-Term Care and Designated Supportive Living (LTC/DSL) sites.
- Please review the Staff FAQ on Single Site, Confirmed Outbreak and Exclusion Orders for more information.

96. Do the single site orders apply to staff at acute care sites?
- The current CMOH Order 10-2020 does not apply to staff who work at acute care sites, and therefore staff are not restricted from working at more than one acute care site.
- A staff member who is working at one LTC/DSL site can also work at acute care sites, unless there has been an outbreak declared at that LTC/DSL site. See the FAQ for more information.

97. I travel between facilities for work. Is this allowed? What do I need to know to keep myself safe?
- Leaders and staff are encouraged to avoid travel between facilities unless operationally required.
- Refer to Travel between facilities information captured in the Preparing our people section in the COVID-19 Re-launch Playbook and Planner for more information and additional resources.
- Midwives and Nurse Practitioners are asked to observe specific measures to ensure their own safety, as well as that of colleagues and patients.

Mass Gatherings and physical distancing (at work and at home)

98. What restrictions have been put in place to slow the spread of the virus?
- Effective May 5th, the Government of Alberta updated public health measures
- Effective April 30th, additional targeted restrictions are in place for certain municipalities, in addition to provincewide restrictions. View each region and applicable restrictions here

99. I work with others. What measures can I take to achieve physical distancing?
- Review the Physical Distancing at work, COVID-19 worker support resource
- Work from home where possible and operationally feasible.
- Maintain physical distance of at least two metres (six feet) between yourself and others.
  - All healthcare workers are required to wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously, at all times and in all areas of the workplace if they:
    1. provide direct patient care
    2. work in patient care areas in both AHS and community settings
    3. cannot maintain adequate physical distancing (a minimum of 2 metres or 6 feet) from patients or co-workers; or
    4. if entry into patient care areas is required
- Review the COVID-19 Re-launch Playbook and Planner for more information on elevator capacity and use protocols or information on safe work practices.

Medical Notes

ahs.ca/covid
100. Im not feeling well. Do I have to provide a medical note to my leader for missed work?
- During this period, AHS will not be asking staff to get a medical note for proof of illness.
- If you are calling in sick because you are experiencing respiratory or flu-like symptoms, please isolate, contact your leader, and complete the Healthcare online assessment tool.

Mental Health

101. I’m struggling with my mental health – where can I get help?
- EFAP Supports:
  - Employee and Family Assistance Program resource guide
  - Employee & Family Assistance Program at 1-877-273-3134.
  - EFAP offers an online cognitive behavioural therapy program called i-Volve. It’s a self-paced, web-based treatment program for depression and anxiety. See a full description here. You can access i-Volve by calling 1-877-273-3134 or by visiting homeweb.ca or e-AP.
  - EFAP Life Smart Coaching
  - EFAP counselling services
- Physicians and their families can access supports offered by the Alberta Medical Association’s Patient and Family Support program by calling 1-877-767-4637 or visiting the Alberta Medical Association.
- Midwives supports can be accessed by visiting the Alberta Association of Midwives.
- Choose from a variety of mental health resources on the Wellness Together Canada Portal.
- Helplines:
  - Mental Health Helpline at 1-877-303-2642 available 24/7.
  - Addiction Helpline
  - Kids Help Phone
  - Community and Social Services Helpline (Alberta 211)
- The Psychologists’ Association of Alberta and Canadian Psychological Association are connecting frontline healthcare providers with members who are providing pro bono psychological services.
- Togetherall — a free, online network that offers anonymous, peer-to-peer mental health services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can sign up for Togetherall at ahs.ca/virtualmentalhealth.
- Additional supports:
  - Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource guide
  - Self-Care Tip Sheets
  - How do I support someone who may be struggling?
  - Supporting Your Mental Health, or take the MyLearning Link course, information here.
  - Wellness Check-in Overview
  - Orientation to Stress
  - COVID-19: Self-care Strategies (EFAP Wellness Seminar)
- Going Home Checklist (whether you are physically leaving work or ending your shift at home)
- Parenting/working from home:
  - Healthy Together is AHS’ guide to family and home life during COVID-19.
  - Supporting you with kids at home or talking to your kids about COVID-19.
  - Helping teens adapt to the new normal
  - Working remotely during COVID-19
  - Helping Your Child Succeed at School (EFAP Wellness Seminar)
  - Foundations of Effective Parenting (E-learning) –through EFAP’s Homeweb.
- Sleep and nutrition resources:
  - Healthy Together
  - Sleeping & Napping
- Check out Help in Tough Times.
- Listen to Dr. Nicholas Mitchell address different, relevant topics on the Mental Wellness Moment series.
- Find more resources to look after your mental health at ahs.ca/covid including the Text4Hope campaign.

102. Where can I find mental wellness apps to support myself and guide my patients to use?
- Mobile Tools to Promote Mental Wellness is a resource for service providers and the public, which highlights free evidenced-based mental wellness apps and questions to ask when choosing an app.
- COVID-19 and Stigma is a great resource for healthcare providers to help understand the stigma related to COVID-19 and how we can help stop it.
103. Are there any wellness seminars specific to COVID-19 that I can attend?
- Search ‘COVID’ or ‘wellness seminars’ on MyearningLink to register. To book an online group session, managers can email wellness@ahs.ca.
- For self-paced learning, visit homeweb.ca.

104. I’m experiencing stress/fear/anxiety. What are some tips to help me deal with these emotions?
- We all experience stress and anxiety differently. You may be working long work hours, caring for your family and yourself, or feeling fatigued.
- Doing the following things may help:
  - Eat well-balanced meals
  - Take a walk or exercise at home
  - Make time for activities you enjoy
  - Call your family, friends - connect with others. Talk with people you trust.
  - Take a break from news and social media.
  - Call the Employee & Family Assistance Program at 1-877-273-3134

105. I’m experiencing grief from the loss of a loved one. Are there resources available to support me?
- Please reach out to the Employee & Family Assistance Program (EFAP) at 1-877-273-3134 for professional counselling support. It is a free, flexible and confidential service available 24/7.
- AHS employees can also access Grief and Loss Coaching through the EFAP Life Smart Coaching services to help provide support and guidance if you are experiencing grief or loss.
- Review supporting each other after a loss as an additional resource for more support.

Relaunch Strategy to Return to Normal Operations

The COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook will help our leaders and staff meet the Government of Alberta guidelines and public health recommendations, incorporate existing practices such as personal protective equipment and physical distancing into their daily work, and learn what steps AHS is taking to keep our people healthy and safe moving forward. Submit questions or feedback to COVIDRelaunch@ahs.ca.

106. What is the Government of Alberta’s strategy for gradual re-launch/return to life as normal?
- Find the most current information about the Government of Alberta relaunch strategy on their website at alberta.ca/covid19.

107. How does AHS align with the guidance provided by the government?
- All workplaces in Alberta are expected to develop and implement policies and procedures in alignment with the guidance provided by the Government of Alberta to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- In addition to the guidelines around essential services, AHS must also comply with the General workplace guidance for business owners re-opening or continuing operations and the Guidance support for non-essential health services.
- Review the Re-launch playbook to understand these changes.

108. How will Alberta and AHS address the backlog of surgeries created by the pandemic?
- On Sept. 10, 2020, Alberta Health and AHS announced a plan to clear the surgical backlog created during the pandemic, by increasing surgical activity volume to 150 per cent in order to meet the 2023 Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI) commitment of providing all scheduled surgery within clinically acceptablenetimes. This plan will support surgical activity in both urban and rural communities across the province.

109. Will AHS screen patients before appointments to ensure they are not ill with COVID-19?
- Patients attending a scheduled, face-to-face appointment, appointment will receive a pre-screening phone call to assess fitness to attend appointments and will be given instruction for attendance based on provincial public health guidelines.
- Patients attending appointments for ambulatory care or DI will also need to follow the AHS visitor guidelines.

ahs.ca/covid
110. Has the Government of Alberta lifted restrictions on allied health services?
- The Government of Alberta announced a plan to lift some restrictions on some allied health services.
- Dental and other regulated healthcare workers such as physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, respiratory therapists, audiologists, social workers, occupational therapists, dieticians and more can resume services by appointment only, as long as they follow approved guidelines set by their professional colleges.
- Please refer to public health guidelines.

111. When will staff be allowed to return to work at their office/site?
- When determining return to work options, leaders will evaluate which functions need to occur at the workplace and what work can continue to occur remotely.
- At this time, staff are still advised to work from home where possible and operationally feasible. Refer to the COVID-19 Temporary Alternate Workplace Arrangements Guide for more information.
- Staff members who are returning to the workplace or have changing personal circumstances may request to work remotely based on personal medical health conditions or dependent care requirements.
  - Additional information including how to request this or a longer-term solution can be found in the Re-launch playbook.

112. Where can businesses find information to support them to remain open or reopen?
- The alberta.ca/bizconnect webpage provides business owners with information on health and safety guidelines for general workplaces and sector-specific guidelines to ensure businesses can reopen safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Isolation, testing for COVID-19 and contact tracing

113. I'm feeling ill and think I may have COVID-19. What should I do?
- Testing is by appointment and can be booked online or by calling Health Link at 811.
- Please note that anyone with symptoms of COVID-19 is allowed to leave home to come for testing, following the guidance outlined in this Order.
  - Review to this question to learn when your isolation is over.

Steps to take if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19
- **Isolate**
- Do not attend work, school, social events, or any other public gatherings.
- Don’t share personal items like dishes, utensils, or towels.
- **Wash your hands often.**
- Avoid close contact with other people, especially those with chronic conditions, a compromised immune system, or seniors (over 65 years of age).
- If your symptoms worsen, call 811.
- Please do not visit a hospital, physician’s office, lab or healthcare facility without consulting your doctor or Health Link (811) first.
  - For a medical emergency, call 911 or go to your nearest emergency department. Inform them that you may have COVID-19.
- Stay home with any cold or flu symptoms until feeling well.
- Travellers must isolate for 14 days upon return, even when feeling fine. If symptoms are experienced during this period of isolation, you must continue to isolate for an additional 10 days following the onset of symptoms, no matter how long you’ve already been in isolation.
- The Return to Work Guide can help you and your manager confirm when it is appropriate to return to work if you’ve been isolating, had symptoms, or been tested.

114. Has testing for children and youth under the age of 18 changed? Why did it change?
- Alberta Health announced a COVID-19 daily checklist for children and youth under the age of 18 (as well as individuals 18 years of age and over attending high school), effective Nov. 2.
• This will directly affect testing and isolation requirements for Albertans under 18 attending classes, daycare or recreational activities, as well as individuals 18 years and over attending high school.
  o Albertans should use the online assessment tool to self-assess for isolation and testing requirements.
• The changes reflect current evidence on the symptoms associated with COVID-19 in children and youth, and will assist with assessing students who may be symptomatic, or who may have been exposed to someone who is ill or has confirmed COVID-19.
• Data shows some single symptoms (such as a runny nose, sore throat, diarrhea, etc.) are commonly associated with many other illnesses in children and are not a strong indicator of COVID-19 in youth, especially if they resolve quickly.
  o For a child with no known exposures to COVID-19 or international travel in the past 14 days, and has any of the following symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath or loss of sense of smell or taste:
    1. The child is to isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms.
    2. Testing is recommended.
    3. If the child has a negative test result and is feeling better, normal activities can resume even before the 10-day isolation is complete.
  o If a child has ONE of: chills; sore throat or painful swallowing; runny nose or congestion; feeling unwell or fatigue; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; unexplained loss of appetite; muscle or joint aches; headache; conjunctivitis:
    1. The child should stay home and monitor for 24 hours.
    2. If their symptom is improving after 24 hours, they can return to school/activities when they feel well enough to go. Testing is not necessary.
    3. If the symptom worsens after 24 hours (or if additional symptoms emerge), testing is recommended but not required. The child can return to activities and school when:
       a. Their symptoms have resolved AND it’s been at least 24 hours since their symptoms started.
  o If the child has any TWO of: chills; sore throat or painful swallowing; runny nose or congestion; feeling unwell or fatigue; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; unexplained loss of appetite; muscle or joint aches; headache; conjunctivitis:
    1. The child should stay home.
    2. Testing is recommended but not required.
       a. The child can attend school/daycare and other public places when their symptoms have resolved AND it’s been 24 hours or more since their symptoms started.
  o Children with any symptoms should not visit a congregate living or acute care facility for 10 days from when symptom(s) started or until they go away (whichever is longer), unless they receive a negative COVID-19 test result and are feeling better.
  o A child who is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case will still need to be home for 14 days.

115. Is there a rapid test to confirm COVID-19 in patients?
• Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has successfully deployed rapid point-of-care testing for COVID-19 in 33 COVID-19 assessment centres in communities across the province, 29 hospitals, as well as at seven homeless shelters in Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton Mobile testing teams equipped with rapid testing capabilities have also been deployed across AHS’ Edmonton and Central Zones, to provide on-site testing at long-term care and designated supportive living facilities. These are all for symptomatic people within seven days of symptom onset
• Broader implementation of rapid testing that is now underway in all AHS zones.
• Rapid point-of-care testing is most effective when used on patients who are within the first week of showing symptoms of COVID-19.
• This type of testing helps to quickly identify and notify positive, speeds up the appropriate care and isolation of patients and reduces the spread of the virus in our communities. It also reduces the need for patient samples to be transported to centralized public laboratories for processing.

116. Is there an expedited process to test frontline workers?
• Where staff are asymptomatic and otherwise able to return to the workplace, the Expedited Return to Work process may also apply.
117. Is AHS offering to test patients for COVID-19 who visit the Emergency Department or an Urgent Care Centre?
   - As of May 30, 2020, AHS is providing COVID-19 testing for any patient in Alberta seeking care in an emergency department (ED) or urgent care centre (UCC) who:
     - is being discharged home,
     - is asymptomatic for COVID-19, and
     - requests, and verbally consents to receiving a swab.

118. Is AHS testing for any other virus beyond COVID-19? Will I be told if I have another virus?
   - Alberta Precision Laboratories will test only for COVID-19 on swabs that are taken in community settings.
   - These swabs will not be tested for influenza. Swabs that are taken from hospitalized patients or patients seen in our emergency departments will still be tested for influenza.

119. When did AHS begin testing for COVID?
   - AHS began offering COVID-19 testing in Alberta on Jan. 23, 2020. Since then, we have progressed significantly in our approach, hitting many other milestones, including:
     - January 2020: dedicated COVID testing available in Alberta
     - March 2020: first Alberta case confirmed
     - March 2020: online assessment tool goes live
     - April 2020: testing offered to all symptomatic Albertans, and auto-dialer delivery of negative test results across the province
     - May 2020: testing eligibility expanded to asymptomatic close contacts of confirmed positive cases
     - June 2020: testing eligibility expanded to all Albertans, symptomatic or not
     - May 2020: new online feature to a book a COVID-19 test went live as an extension to the online assessment tool
     - August 2020: partnership with pharmacies including Shoppers Drug Mart, to expand accessibility of asymptomatic testing.

120. Testing before and after travel:
   - Refer to this question for more information on testing before you travel.

121. How do I get my COVID-19 test results?
   - Albertans may receive their COVID-19 test results — either positive or negative — through a text message or an automated phone call. People who don’t choose the text or automated call methods will receive their results by a phone call from an AHS team member.
   - You may receive a text notification with your results at any time of the day, seven days a week. Automated phone calls are made between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., seven days a week.
   - Parents and guardians will also be able to consent to receive automated test results for dependents (aged 17 years and younger). Each test result is delivered by a dedicated call or text. This could mean multiple calls or texts are delivered to a single number provided for a family.
   - Albertans age 14 and up can also access MyHealth Records for COVID-19 test results.
   - Parents can access their children’s COVID-19 test results in addition to their own results. Parents will need to provide their child’s personal health number and test date to access their child’s COVID-19 test results (within the last 30 days).
   - School-related contacts will continue to receive email notification from AHS, and workplaces and organizers of events of 10 or more attendees will also still be asked to notify the appropriate staff and all attendees, respectively.
     - Refer to this question to understand the notification process for close contacts of positive cases.
   - Review the Guidance While Waiting for a Return Call information.

122. I was tested for COVID-19. When am I required to isolate/quarantine?
   - The COVID-19 test detects if the virus is in your nose or throat. Testing will tell you whether you have COVID-19 at the time of your test, even if you are not showing symptoms. It is important that you understand what to do while you await your tests results, and what it means if your COVID-19 test is positive or negative:
     - Refer to ahs.ca/isolation for more information.
123. I tested positive for COVID-19. How will close contacts be identified and notified?

- AHS’ case investigation and contact tracing team is reaching out to all COVID-19 cases and close contacts.
- If you receive a positive COVID-19 result, visit ahs.ca/closecontacts before you receive a call from a case investigator. Click on the COVID-19 Close Contact Tool and enter contact information for your close contacts. This helps our team identify and notify close contacts as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- AHS continues to work with partners including event organizers and workplaces to notify event attendees and employees of an exposure.

124. What defines a close contact?

- A close contact is anyone who, during the infectious period:
  - lived with or was within two metres of a person who has COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more of cumulative contact, i.e. multiple interactions for a total of 15 minutes or more, even if a mask was worn during that contact, or
  - has had direct contact with bodily fluids of a person who has COVID-19 (e.g., was coughed or sneezed on), or
  - provided direct care for a person who has COVID-19, or
  - had physical contact with a person who has COVID-19, such as handshake, hugging, kissing, or sexual activity, or
  - shared items with a person who has COVID-19 such as drinks, personal hygiene items, cigarettes, vapes, lipstick, eating utensils, etc.
- See ahs.ca/infoforclosecontacts for more information.

125. I tested positive for COVID-19. When will I receive a call from a contact tracer?

- Currently, AHS is contacting and investigating all COVID-19 cases we receive each day. We are reaching out to cases within 24 hours of receiving confirmation of their positive test result.

126. I tested positive for COVID-19. When is my isolation over?

- Isolating and quarantining help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reducing the number of people you could infect if you're sick. Both require staying home and avoiding situations where the virus could spread.
- Refer to the Government of Alberta for more information on isolation requirements.
- Isolation generally ends 10 days after your symptom onset IF you have not had a fever for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, AND your other symptoms have improved. If symptoms such as fever have continued, the isolation period should continue until 24 hours after fever has ended (without the use of fever-reducing medications). Some symptoms such as fatigue and cough may last longer than 10 days, but do not require a longer isolation.
- If you never develop symptoms, your isolation period ends 10 days after the date when your first positive COVID-19 swab was taken.
- All Albertans who test positive for COVID-19 will receive a text message to notify them when their isolation period has ended.
- Check ahs.ca/isolation for more information on isolation requirements, testing options, symptoms and supports available.

127. UPDATED Do I need a test to confirm that I don’t have COVID-19 before I can return to work?

- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms is legally required to isolate themselves for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and until their symptoms have resolved.
- Based on current evidence, re-testing within 90 days of a positive test result is not recommended as long as you do not have symptoms. Some people continue to test positive for up to 90 days after their infection. This does not mean you are still infectious.
- Healthcare workers do not have any additional requirements and may return to work at the end of their isolation period. AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Lab employees can refer to COVID-19 Return to Work Guide for AHS Healthcare Workers for further instruction or review this question for more.
128. If I am a confirmed close contact but have tested negative and have no symptoms, do I need to isolate?
- Yes, you must continue to isolate until 14 days after the last exposure to the case.
- For more information:
  - Do I Need to Isolate/Quarantine?
  - Isolation and Quarantine Information
  - See Alberta Health Isolation and Quarantine Requirements for information on testing, isolation/quarantine requirements and supports for variant cases, close contacts and household contacts

129. How will I be notified of an occupational exposure to COVID-19?
- WHS is launching an autodialer system to support healthcare worker contact tracing, similar to what Public Health has adopted. The system will enhance current tracing processes by alleviating pressures when triaging and shortlisting workers that have met the exposure criteria.
- If a possible occupational exposure to COVID-19 occurs within your workplace, particularly during an outbreak, you could receive a call from the autodialer.
- You will receive the following information during the call:
  - The initial message will inform you that it is the AHS autodialer. It will ask you to press a key to begin the questionnaire, which implies consent to use the autodialer.
  - The system will then ask a brief series of logistical questions to make this occupational exposure determination.
  - Once the system has completed the questions, you will then be informed of the next steps and required action.
  - If you are informed that you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19, it is important that you isolate immediately. An Occupational Health Nurse (OHN) will then contact you with the next steps.
  - The autodialer would not be used to contact workers who have tested positive. We would rely on our existing processes for this.
- You may need the following information:
  - Personal Health Card Number
  - You must ensure your phone number has been updated in e-People to be eligible to receive a call from the autodialer for contact tracing purposes.
- If the call drops, your call was logged as an answered call, but not complete. The system will make three attempts to contact you before leaving a message. You will be added to the list for follow-up by WHS.
- If you are busy when you answer the call, you will be offered an opportunity to put a brief hold on the call to complete a task before the questionnaire.
- These automated calls will be delivered between 8 a.m. and 10 p.m. seven days a week. There is no charge for the automated phone calls.
- Record retention will be maintained at 11 years to meet the compliance of AHS Privacy Policy.
- The autodialer and SMS systems are programmed to provide results to the numbers provided by e-People.

130. I got the flu shot and am now experiencing symptoms after getting immunized. What should I do?
- Staff who receive the flu shot may experience side effects from the vaccine. These reactions are typically mild, develop within 24 hours and can last up to 48 hours after immunization. While the reactions that can occur are typical, they are similar to symptoms of COVID-19.
- Staff who experience symptoms would not be considered fit to work. Staff should stay home, and contact their leader and the Post Influenza Immunization After-care Guidance.
- This guidance document provides direction for staff if they experience symptoms and outlines when they can return to work in alignment with the return to work decision chart.

131. Will staff have to isolate if there is a confirmed case or outbreak at their child’s school? Are staff required to isolate when their children are isolating?
- This is determined by the Government of Alberta. Staff should consult the Government of Alberta’s School Re-Entry Plan for more information on how schools will be handling any potential cases of
COVID-19 at schools. Additional information if there is a case of COVID-19 at school is available on the Government of Alberta website.

- Staff who have children who are isolating should refer to the Return to Work Decision Chart for Healthcare Workers to determine whether they need to isolate or be tested.
- Anyone with symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition is required to stay home and isolate. Take the online assessment to arrange for testing. Refer to the Government of Alberta website for additional information and requirements around isolation and testing.
- Review the Guidance for Parents of Children Attending School and/or Childcare. The new resource provides specific information about what to do if a child feels unwell and/or has been notified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19.

132. Do you have any recommendations for people who are isolating?
- If you need to isolate, follow these guidelines:
  - stay home - do not attend work, social events or any other public gatherings
  - avoid close contact with other people - especially seniors and people with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems
  - watch for symptoms in yourself or a family member
- Monitor your symptoms
  - stay home - do not go to an ED or clinic
  - take the Healthcare and Shelter Workers / Enforcement Personnel / First Responders online self-assessment tool to determine next steps and find out if testing is required
- Find additional isolation guidelines here, or at the Alberta Health and Health Canada website.

133. Can I report someone who is not following isolation rules?
- The Government of Alberta has put legally binding rules to protect the health and safety of Albertans.
- Law enforcement agencies have been granted full authority to issue fines for those who are not complying with the current public health orders, including those for isolating and limiting mass gatherings.
- If you are concerned someone is not following public health orders, you can:
  - Remind the person that not following public health orders is against the law and puts people at risk
  - Submit a complaint to AHS public health inspectors online or leave a message at 1-833-415-9179

134. What supports are available for healthcare workers?
- Government financial aid plans may be available for those that are unable to come to work due to isolation that do not have access to paid leave or other income support.
- Staff can find information provided by the Government of Alberta and the AHS Record of Employment (ROE) for COVID-19 for further details.
- Refer to this question about income support or paid leave for individuals who are unable to work because they are forced to take time off work to care for a dependent because of the pandemic.
- Hotel rooms are available for people who must isolate or quarantine but cannot do so in their current homes. See Information for people required to isolate or quarantined in a hotel for more information.

135. Where can I find COVID-19 statistics on healthcare workers?
- Review the AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard or infographic.
- 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.

Staff redeployment

136. Why is AHS redeploying staff?
- Staff working in areas where services are temporarily reduced or paused, may be redeployed to areas across AHS to enable increased service demands and/or continuation of services where staffing needs and pressures are identified. To learn more, see:
  - COVID-19 Redeployment for Non-Union Exempt Employees FAQ
  - COVID-19 Redeployment for Unionized Employees FAQ

ahs.ca/covid
137. Will I be deployed to work in another area?
- Redeployment to another area depends upon whether or not your skills and experience are matched with an area of high needs and other factors, including if you:
  - Work in an area where services are discontinued, reduced or paused during the pandemic
  - Have specialized skills or experience in an area of high demand
  - Have expressed an interest in being redeployed
  - Are needed to replace others who are being redeployed
  - Are needed to replace in other areas/locations experiencing staff shortages due to employees who are unable to work due to being ill or ordered to isolate.
- Redeployed staff will continue to be covered by terms of their applicable collective agreement, including their current compensation.

138. Will I be looking after confirmed COVID-19 patients?
- Depending on where you have been temporarily redeployed, you may be providing care to patients with COVID-19. If this occurs, you will be provided with the necessary education and appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to support you in your work. See this question for more info.

139. Will I go back to my normal work when the pandemic is over?
- Yes. It is anticipated that employees will return to their former position when the pandemic is over, unless there are some exceptional considerations. You will be notified in advance when you will be returned.

**Training**

140. Is in-person training allowed? How can I reduce risk when facilitating an in-person session?
- When in-person training is necessary, additional planning should be done to ensure we provide a safe and positive learning experience for all participants. If you are planning in-person training, refer to the COVID-19 Re-launch playbook and planner for the most up-to-date information on training and room layout options to accommodate safe training delivery.

141. I was scheduled to take Basic Life Support training. Will this still be offered?
- Due to BLS course cancellations, AHS employees who require BLS training will be permitted to continue to work in circumstances where individual certification has expired until March 31, 2021.
- Visit the BLS Insite page for the most up-to-date information on course availability.

142. Are student placements to continue during the pandemic? Where can I get more information?
- Clinical operations are encouraged to facilitate student placements, particularly for those students in their final weeks of placements. The principles document can be used to guide decision-making for student placements.
- If you are making changes to your student placements, please contact Teri Langlois or Jacqueline Albers.

143. What resources and training are available to prevent workplace harassment and violence?
- At AHS, we value compassion and respect. While this is a stressful and tiring time for all, there are many ways we can show each other and our patients’ kindness and respect. AHS has several resources to support you in having safe interactions with each other and those we care for:
  - Supporting Each Other – Returning to Work
  - How to Stay Safe and be Respectful with Each Other
  - Building Healthy Work Relationships – Behaviour Continuum
  - How to Support Mask Wearing
- You can also use the Safe Care, Together Posters and Please Be Kind to Us Poster to encourage compassion and respect from our patients and families. Additional resources and tools include:
  - Self-Care and Safe Communication Strategies for working with the public
  - POHV Recommendations for COVID-19 Assessment Centre Staff
  - POHV Recommendations for COVID-19 Non-Clinical Screening Tables
- In addition, the following training is available:
  - Respectful Workplaces and the Prevention of Harassment and Violence Policy course
  - Preventing and Responding to Patient-to-Worker Harassment and Violence course
  - Patient-to-Worker Harassment and Violence Prevention Training Guide
Travel

144. Where can I get the latest advice for travellers?
- An official global travel advisory is in effect.
- Both the Governments of Canada and Alberta continue to advise against all non-essential travel outside of Canada and all cruise ship travel.
- As of Jan. 7, 2021, travellers must present proof of a negative COVID-19 test result (either paper or electronic) to an airline prior to boarding a flight to Canada. Learn more about COVID-19 pre-departure testing.
- New federal travel restrictions around non-essential travel are in effect:
  - All air travellers arriving in Canada will be required to take a COVID-19 molecular test on arrival at their own cost. Travellers must also reserve a three-night stay at a Government of Canada approved hotel while awaiting their results.
  - Proof of a negative COVID-19 molecular will also be required for travellers entering by land.
  - Travellers will still be required to complete the mandatory 14-day quarantine under the Quarantine Act.
- Additional resources:
  - Travel Restrictions in Canada
  - World Health Organization | WHO Travel Advice

145. What is AHS’ current guidance on international travel?
- All non-exempt travellers arriving in Alberta from outside of Canada are legally required to quarantine for a period of 14 days (as per the CMOH order).
- AHS continues to strongly discourage all non-essential international travel while emergency measures and travel advisories from the Governments of Canada and Alberta are in place.
- As healthcare workers, it is our responsibility to set a positive example in following current travel advisories. Recent agreements with all of our unions highlight that AHS and the unions strongly discourage healthcare workers from non-essential international travel.
- All employees should ensure requests for time off incorporate any required quarantine periods and that appropriate arrangements are made in advance for remote work, if possible.
- Managers should confirm if employees will need to quarantine after their requested time off and consider operational impacts when approving or denying time-off requests.
- Staff who have any questions or concerns, please reach out to your leader.

146. I have to travel and need a copy of my test results to share with the airline and the country I will be visiting. How can I access a printed copy of my results?
- Albertans can access a new fee-for-service COVID travel testing service, offered by Dynalife Medical Labs. For a fee of $150, travelers can be tested by appointment only and receive results that are valid within 72 hours of the arrival time at their destination. Tests must be booked at least 24 hours before departure.
- To access this testing, Albertans should visit ahs.ca/covid, and complete the self-assessment, indicating they require testing for their travel plans. Albertans requiring COVID testing for travel purposes will then be redirected to DynaLife’s travel testing booking system.
- Clients will be able to book an appointment at the nearest available travel test collection site. Initial travel test collection sites will be located in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray.
147. I'm a physician/healthcare worker returning from a trip. Am I exempt from the mandatory quarantine period?

- When Canadian citizens enter Canada from abroad, they must adhere to relevant measures in the federal Quarantine Act that require a quarantine period of 14 days upon arrival. There is also a Provincial Order under the Public Health Act. Exemptions per the terms of both federal recommendations and the Provincial Order are required in order for an individual to be exempt from quarantine in Alberta.
- In relation to exemptions for physicians and healthcare workers, although the federal Order contemplates scenarios where a licensed healthcare professional may need to enter Canada and provide health services, this does not extend to those returning from non-essential travel, and it restricts the healthcare professional by prohibiting them for caring for people 65 years of age or older.
- Because this is already detailed in the Federal Order, the Government of Alberta will not be issuing provincial quarantine exemptions for anyone returning from non-essential travel outside of Canada.
- It is important for all physicians and healthcare workers deemed essential by the Alberta government, to keep this in mind when contemplating non-essential travel plans.
- All Albertans choosing to travel internationally at this time will be subject to the mandatory 14-day quarantine period upon their return.

148. I recently returned from travelling outside of Canada and feel unwell. What should I do?

- All travellers returning from outside Canada are:
  - legally required to quarantine for 14 days, and
  - monitor for symptoms: cough, fever, shortness of breath, nasal congestion, or sore throat
  - If you become sick during this time, you must isolate for at least 10 additional days from all other members of your household from the beginning of symptoms or until you are feeling well, whichever takes longer.
- Testing is by appointment and can be booked online or by calling Health Link at 811.
- For guidance on returning to work following travel, refer to the COVID-19 Return to Work Guide for Healthcare Workers.

149. I travel as part of my job at AHS. Is travel still allowed?

- For essential travel guidance, AHS follows the official directive of the Government of Alberta. As of March 12, all AHS business travel outside the country and province is suspended until further notice.
- For more information, see the Travel and Vacation Guidelines for Leaders.

150. I recently travelled; how do I find out if someone on my flight tested positive for COVID-19?

- Recent passengers on domestic and international airlines should monitor the Government of Canada list of flights that have confirmed COVID-19 cases and follow instructions if affected. Check the federal list of affected flights.
- At-risk passengers are encouraged to quarantine and monitor for symptoms for 14 days after arrival in Canada.

**Vacation**

151. What should I do if I have vacation scheduled but am called in or told to isolate?

- Employees should speak to their leader directly for approval to delay or reschedule vacation time.

**Virtual care**

152. I’m a clinician providing care virtually to patients. Where can I find video or teleconference information?

- AHS Virtual Health has an external website offering information and tools to support virtual healthcare, including supporting interactions for those patients in isolation, unable to attend an AHS clinic, or located in rural and remote areas.
- To help protect privacy and confidentiality when discussing patient, health and AHS business information, only use AHS approved and secure teleconferencing tools: Skype, Telehealth and AHS Zoom.
• Visit AHS Virtual Health on Insite to learn more about how our team can support you with virtual care, including access to recommendations, resources, tools and educational opportunities.
• For additional support, please contact virtualhealth.info@ahs.ca or complete the Virtual Health Intake Form.

153. I’m a physician – do we have resources with advice to work from home?
• The AHS Chief Medical Information Office (CMIO) has produced a manual and guide offering practical advice about how physicians can work remotely, while remaining mindful of organizational, legislative and professional obligations.
• Health Information sharing during COVID-19 has been updated to include additional details of when information can be shared by the Medical Officer of Health, under the Public Health Act.

154. Can I record the patient sessions and/or team meetings held on zoom?
• Recordings of virtual visits are only appropriate if there is a specific purpose for the recording (e.g., to monitor and document treatment progress, student supervision, staff education, special projects, or quality assurance).
• For more information, please see this guidance, or contact ahszoom@albertahealthservices.ca for more information.

155. Are there interpretation services available on Zoom?
• To support access to the Language Line, which connects healthcare teams with language interpreters for patients, Zoom offers physicians and clinicians the ability to dial out of a Zoom call. Refer to Virtual Health Language & Communication Supports for AHS Zoom.
• For more information on Zoom, please visit the Virtual Health webpage.

156. I work in Allied Health. What guidance should we follow when providing care to patients virtually?
• The Virtual Practice Guidance for Allied Health Disciplines lists key areas to consider, including patient safety, informed consent, privacy, equipment and clinical strategies, to help allied health managers and providers adapt clinical care to virtual delivery.
• Additional, discipline specific guidelines, can be found here.
• For questions or more information, contact practice.consultation@ahs.ca or visit Insite.

157. As an AHS staff member/physician, am I allowed to use text to communicate with patients?
• Messaging Guidelines for Virtual Care are available to guide clinicians/physicians with the use of messaging, including text messaging, when communicating with patients.
• When messaging with Connect Care, MyAHS Connect patient portal, or AHS secure email (Outlook), is not possible, texting at AHS is permitted using the built-in text messaging application for limited purposes, in which identifiable health, personal or confidential AHS business information is not shared, and only when using an AHS or AHS-approved device.
• To learn more about what you can and cannot text, the privacy risks, legislation that must be followed and how to safeguard privacy and information security, check out this at-a-glance texting resource.

158. Are texts considered to be an official record? Do they have to be kept with the patients file?
• Please note that AHS texts are considered to be an official record under both the Health Information Act (HIA) and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP).
• As such, AHS texts must be retained in accordance with AHS Charting Standards and Records Retention Schedules. Documentation of the messaging encounter should take place within the legal record of care. Please refer to these guidelines for more information.
• Texts may also need to be provided as part of a formal records request under HIA or FOIP.
• See InfoCare to learn more about privacy and information security matters at AHS, and email questions to InfoCare@ahs.ca.

159. What guidelines should Congregate Living Sites use when using technology to provide care?
• Technology for Video Virtual Healthcare Delivery in Congregate Living Sites during COVID-19.
• Technology for Social Connection in Congregate Living Sites during COVID-19.
Visitor restrictions

160. What is the difference between a designated support person(s) and a visitor?

- A designated support person:
  - Is a consistent individual identified by the patient as an essential support
  - Is someone the patient wants involved in their care and health matters
  - Is at least 18 years of age for pediatric patients and 14 years of age for adult patients
  - Can be a family member, relative, close friend, or an informal or hired caregiver
  - Should be included as much as the patient/alternate decision maker requests for palliative and end-of-life care, critical care, life threatening diagnosis disclosure or as requested by the care team
  - Can support patients with suspected/confirmed COVID-19 but must pre-book access with the service area and their visitation be approved by and under the direction of the Infection Prevention and Control team
  - Cannot be on isolation or quarantine, for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 unless meeting the criteria of an exemption
  - Will need to work with the patient’s care team to determine when the best time is for them to come to the site

- A visitor is anyone not identified as a designated support person and is currently limited in acute care settings to:
  - Individuals that have received government approved compassionate exemptions
  - Individuals visiting patients at end-of-life including faith/religious leaders, elders/Helpers, traditional knowledge keeper or legal supports if requested by the patient/decision-maker
  - Designated support persons and visitors should assess their risk of exposure and transmission of COVID-19 before they enter an AHS site. To support this, we have created two brochures for designated family/support persons: Know Your Risk and Know Your Role.
  - Patients can determine who will be their designated support person and the extent the person is involved in their care, including collaborating with the healthcare team.

161. How can I identify if someone is a designated support person or a visitor?

- AHS has implemented Designated Support and Visitation Guidance to direct staff on how to support family presence and visitation practices during COVID-19.
- As part of this guidance, we have introduced identification labels for designated support persons. The ID labels include a space to write in the date a designated family/support person signs into a site.
- All sites with designated family/support persons are required to use the labels and have them available at all screening stations.
- Zones are asked to work with their Operations and BAS representatives to track them as an incremental COVID-19 cost. More information on how to order the labels is available on Insite.

162. Are people allowed to visit patients in an acute in-patient setting? In a continuing care setting?

- For the most up-to-date version of the enhanced visitation guidelines and information on screening for people visiting residents and patients is available at ahs.ca/visitation.

163. Are people allowed to visit patients in an acute care facility on outbreak?

- The extent of restrictions will vary site-to-site due to patient circumstances, operational considerations and ability to maintain physical distancing.
- More information is available at ahs.ca/visitation.
164. What do I or my site need to know about the new directive for visitation in Acute Care, Ambulatory and Emergency sites?

- The Designated Support Person and Visitor Access in Acute Care, Ambulatory, and Emergency Sites Directive came into effect on Oct. 21 and will be updated again in spring of 2021 to align with organizational and provincial COVID-19 mitigation plans.
- The directive outlines expectations and requirements for all AHS sites regarding implementation of the COVID-19 designated support person and visitor access guidance.
- It is necessary that all site leaders be familiar with the directive requirements, as well as review the designated support person and visitor access guidance routinely (we recommend bi-weekly) as this document is subject to frequent updates.

165. Will designated support and visitors be screened prior to entering an acute care setting?

- AHS has an enhanced designated support and visitor screening tool in all acute care sites.
- This tool provides greater accuracy for those individuals who many not be symptomatic, yet are still in quarantine. It is intended to be done verbally. No personal information will be saved.
- Exemptions are included for designated family/support persons for pediatric patients, maternity or dependent adults based on the current guidelines, patient situation, site and care team.
- Refer to this question about the requirements for masking by a designated support person or visitor.
- Contact patient.engagement@ahs.ca with questions.

166. Are there exceptions to allow visitors? Are visitors allowed to attend to a friend or loved one who is passing away?

- For the most up-to-date version of the enhanced visitation guidelines visit www.ahs.ca/visitation.

167. Can someone who has recently travelled and is in quarantine receive an exemption to visit a patient or resident who is receiving critical care or end-of-life care?

- Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services have established a process for persons seeking exemption from either federal and/or provincial quarantine to visit a patient, client or resident who is receiving critical care for a life-threatening illness or imminent end-of-life care at an AHS, Covenant or continuing care facility or in a home setting.
- This applies to all AHS and non-AHS facilities, including acute care, continuing care, hospice, and home settings where staff, contractors or subcontractors are providing care.
- There are three process options:
  - Facility (acute care, continuing care, hospice)
  - Non-facility (home setting)
  - Coming from outside of Canada
- This process does not apply if the person requesting exemption is symptomatic or has COVID-19 as they are no longer in quarantine and are required under Section 6 of CMOH Order 28-2020 to isolate.
- The request may be initiated by the patient, client or resident seeking visitation, their alternate decision maker, or the individual requesting to visit.
- For people travelling to Alberta from outside Canada for a compassionate reason, they will need both provincial and federal exemptions from mandatory quarantine.
- These individuals must receive advance approval from the Public Health Agency of Canada before travelling to and entering Canada.
- Check this page for more information or review the FAQ.

168. Can family members book an appointment online to schedule visits with patients at a continuing care site?

- Albertans who would like to request a visit at participating AHS, Capital Care, Carewest and Covenant Health continuing care sites can go to AHS.ca/ccvisits and complete the online booking request form specifying the location and preferred date and time of the visit.
- If a request cannot be accommodated, the submitter will receive an email directing you to request a visit for another date or time.
- Participating locations will have a link to the online booking request tool. All other sites will have their contact information available on the page for Albertans looking to request a visit by phone.
- The tool supports the visitation process outlined in the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Order 29-2020, whereby in-person and virtual visits with a designated family/support person or visitor must be prearranged with staff at the site.
169. Where can I receive support on the updated guidelines?

- The AHS Clinical Ethics Service 24/7 Rapid Response Ethics Consultation Service is available to respond to questions and issues relating to family presence and visitation guidelines, in addition to other COVID-19 related questions.
  - The Rapid Response Ethics Consultation Service can be accessed by calling 403-689-3548.
  - For other clinical ethics inquiries, please email clincialethics@ahs.ca or call 1-855-943-2821. The Clinical Ethics Service is available for any care provider seeking support and assistance in resolving difficult or ethically challenging situations.
- Support services for staff on the updated guidelines are also available through Health Professions Strategy & Practice (HPSP) and Engagement & Patient Experience.

170. What can I say to families who are upset by visitor restrictions?

- Encourage families to consider alternate methods for communication, such as a phone call or video calling such as Facetime or Skype, to connect with the patient. Review using Technology to Connect with Your Loved Ones.
- You can also use the Safe Care, Together Posters and Please Be Kind to Us Poster to encourage compassion and respect from our patients and families. Additional resources and tools include:
  - Self-Care and Safe Communication Strategies for working with the public
  - POHV Recommendations for COVID-19 Assessment Centre Staff
  - POHV Recommendations for COVID-19 Non-Clinical Screening Tables

171. How is Protective Services supporting visitors and entry restrictions during the pandemic?

- Protective Services has launched a Safety Ambassadors program. Safety Ambassadors are responsible for supporting staff at the screening stations, greeting and educating visitors on current AHS visitation policies, helping with wayfinding, and sharing information on any COVID-19 related expectations or policies.
- Although part of Protective Services, Safety Ambassadors are not peace officers or security guards, and will not have the authority to engage directly in security-related activities.

Volunteer restrictions

172. Are volunteer programs currently open?

- Volunteer programs in acute care, long-term care, cancer care, designated supportive living and other licensed supporting living facilities have been relaunched, depending on the site and program needs.
- Where there are initiatives that require volunteer support, Volunteer Resources, at the direction of the site/program leadership, will reach out to appropriate registered volunteers.
- Volunteer Resources will provide volunteers with guidance so they are aware of the safety and health risks associated with COVID-19, at the time of request. Volunteers will then be able to make an informed decision about their involvement.
- Volunteer Resources and/or the program area will provide volunteers with training and essential protective equipment needed to provide the service requested.
- Volunteers are required to complete a mandatory COVID-19 orientation. This orientation will be consistent across the province with Zone/site/program specific additions appended as needed.
- Review this page for more information about the changes to our volunteer programs here.
- We recognize that certain initiatives still need volunteer support. For that reason, volunteers will only be redeployed, if needed, for the COVID-19 response. This redeployment will be voluntary – no volunteer will be redeployed without their agreement.

173. Is AHS currently accepting new volunteers?

- Yes, Volunteer Resources is currently accepting new volunteers, at the discretion of the site, through the online application portals.
- Volunteers will be directed not to come to facilities unless specifically requested by Volunteer Resources.
- Volunteer interviews and orientation (AHS, site and role) will be held online to minimize their presence at facilities.
174. I have a child going to school/childcare and am unsure what steps I should take if my child feels unwell or is a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. Where can I find more information?

- AHS has released Guidance for Parents of Children Attending School and/or Childcare which provides specific information about what to do if a child feels unwell and/or has been notified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19. Learn more at ahs.ca/parentcovidguide.
- Visit alberta.ca/returntoschool for more information and guidance on re-entry for the 2020/21 school year.
- Refer to this question for more information on isolation requirements if there is a confirmed case or outbreak at your child’s school or if your child is required to isolate.

175. I have to take time off work to care for a dependant. Is there financial aid available to me?

- On Oct. 9, the Government of Canada announced changes to financial aid, including a new sick leave benefit and a new caregiver benefit for those forced to take time off work to care for a dependent because of the pandemic. Learn more about the benefits and supports available here.
- Refer to this question for details about paid leave or income support if you or a family member must isolate but don’t have paid leave or other income support.

176. I am not a frontline healthcare worker. Am I allowed to work from home?

- We continue to ask those who are able to work from home within their role to do so, until further notice.
- The COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook contains guidance and support for staff who are working remotely.
- Remote staff should refrain from entering their offices if they have not been asked to return by their leaders. Leaders must ensure that remote staff only go to AHS workplaces for valid business reasons, and all staff must complete the Fit for Work Screening prior to entering any AHS workplace.
- For more information, reference the COVID-19 Temporary Alternate Workplace Arrangement Guide.

177. Where can I get more information about the tools I need to work effectively from home?

- Information has been posted on Insite to explain the technical options for working from home and for accessing applications remotely.

178. What privacy and security steps should I take when working from home?

- To help protect privacy and confidentiality when discussing patient, health and AHS business information, only use approved and secured conferencing tools to ensure our compliance with the Health Information Act and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- Health Information sharing during COVID-19 has been updated to include additional details of when information can be shared by the Medical Officer of Health, under the Public Health Act.

179. I'm struggling to balance my work responsibilities with the needs of my children and/or family. Where can I get more resources or support?

- Check the Employee and Family Assistance Program resource guide or reach out to the Employee & Family Assistance Program at 1-877-273-3134 for professional supports.
- Healthy Together is AHS’ guide to family and home life during COVID-19.
- Supporting you with kids at home or talking to your kids about COVID-19.
- Helping teens adapt to the new normal
- Working remotely during COVID-19
- Back to school with COVID-19

180. I'm working from home but have parking access. Can I suspend my parking?

- AHS employees with monthly parking privileges who are still working from home can apply to temporarily suspend their parking. Refer to Temporary Suspension of Parking Privileges. Please refer to the FAQ’s for more information on start dates and reimbursements.
- For all questions/concerns regarding parking, please refer to Insite for a complete list of Parking Offices and contact information.
AHS and the Government of Alberta are distributing COVID-19 vaccine through a phased immunization program. More information is available on our COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ and at alberta.ca/covid.

Additional Resources:
- COVID-19 Immunization for Health Professionals
- COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A for Healthcare Practitioners (AH)
- Community Physicians FAQ
- Vaccine Sequencing for Healthcare Workers
- COVID-19 Immunization Online Booking Tool FAQ
- COVID-19: What You Need to Know
  - Who should get the vaccine
  - How many doses you need
  - How well the vaccine works
  - Side effects
  - Who should not get the vaccine
  - Care after immunization
- Common Questions about Vaccine Safety

181. Who is currently eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine?
- Alberta Health, with input from AHS, has identified the following key populations to be included in the province’s phased immunization program.
- At this time there are no wait lists to join or applications for early immunization consideration.
- If you are a healthcare worker and have any questions about your eligibility, see the Top COVID-19 Vaccine Sequencing Questions for more information. You may also, contact your supervisor or medical leader. Please do not call Health Link.

182. What criteria are used to determine which healthcare workers receive COVID-19 vaccine first?
- Working within the immunization allocation parameters outlined by Alberta Health, AHS identified several groups of healthcare workers to be included in the initial phase of roll out. These groups were selected to support acute care capacity and to protect populations at highest risk of severe outcomes.
- See Vaccine Sequencing for Healthcare Workers for more information. A pdf version is also available to print and share with your teams.

183. How will I get the COVID-19 vaccine?
- Eligible healthcare workers will be able to book their immunization appointment online at ahs.ca/covidvaccine or through participating pharmacies

184. Are healthcare workers expected to get the COVID-19 vaccine? What if I decline?
- The COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary for HCW in Alberta. We encourage all healthcare workers to get the vaccine once they are eligible to receive it to help protect themselves, their patients and communities against COVID-19.
- At this time, a worker’s COVID-19 immunization status will not affect any workplace considerations. Vaccinated workers will still have the same PPE requirements, exposure criteria, isolation and quarantine requirements, and testing requirements as an unvaccinated worker. Unlike with other communicable disease outbreaks, declining the COVID-19 vaccination will neither change their ability to work in outbreak settings nor have any other negative employment repercussions.
- This change from normal practice is due to the fact that not all of the workforce has yet had the opportunity to be immunized and that the COVID-19 vaccine is not yet widely available in the community.

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As these factors change, the impact on not being vaccinated will change to reflect current practices for influenza, which does impact an employee if they have chosen not to get immunized.

185. **NEW I have concerns about COVID-19 vaccines. Where can I find more information?**
- AHS has launched an awareness campaign to help staff get the information they need to stay safe and address different feelings and concerns about COVID-19 immunization.
- This campaign is aimed to create a safe space to support staff who have questions about getting immunized. By continuing to build trust, sharing fact-based information and having ongoing conversations with each other about COVID-19 immunization, we can maintain a work environment that promotes worker and patient safety.
- Visit the [COVID-19 Immunization Inside](#) page for regular updates and resources as they become available.

186. **Are staff able to leave work during their scheduled shift to be immunized?**
- On April 21, the Government of Alberta introduced job-protected paid leave to allow Albertans to access their COVID-19 vaccine. This new legislation means that all AHS employees, whether full-time, part-time or casual, can access up to three consecutive hours of paid leave (or longer if the employer deems it reasonable) to get each dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.
- AHS strongly urges eligible healthcare workers to get immunized against COVID-19 as soon as possible. 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 requesting this leave.
- This leave only applies to appointments that occur during a shift and not those that occur during unscheduled time.

187. **Will staff being immunized be compensated for their time, travel and parking?**
- Where COVID-19 immunizations are approved to be scheduled during a shift, the appointment and any required travel time will be considered work time.
- Based on agreements with HSAA (Memorandum of Agreement re: COVID-19 Measures and Bargaining, (March 25, 2021 – June 30, 2021)), some staff are eligible to be compensated for one hour of time to attend COVID-19 immunization appointments outside of working hours. NUEEs are also eligible.
  - As of March 31st, members of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) and non-union exempt employees (NUEEs) *only* are eligible for one hour of compensation.
  - **NOTE:** if an employee has already worked a full day, the applicable rate of pay will be at the overtime rate.
  - Any required travel time will be considered as part of the one hour of paid time.
- For HSAA and NUEEs *only*, where a manager has approved the scheduled immunization appointment either during a shift or outside of working hours:
  - HSAA employees are entitled to reimbursement for mileage and parking
  - Managers have the discretion to approve NUEE mileage and parking expenses should they see fit.
  - Any approved expenses must be in accordance with the HSAA collective agreement and/or the Travel policy.

188. **What is the course of action if managers are unable to/are not willing to let staff leave during work time (due to workload or competing priorities) to be immunized?**
- 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.
- Managers should have open and frank discussions with employees if they feel they cannot grant the leave, and work with employees to look at all other options for scheduling the vaccination leave.

189. **NEW Are staff able to take time off work to take their children to their COVID-19 immunization appointments?**
- In order to avoid creating additional staffing pressures, employees with children who are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine are asked to make these appointments during off duty time, whenever possible.
- Managers and employees are encouraged to explore available options with respect to time off requests in order to minimize time absent from work and allow easier coverage for the absence.
- In the event that an employee is unable to make an appointment for their children during off duty time, the
employee must discuss this with their manager and request time off through the normal processes. Requests for time off during a shift are approved at the discretion of the manager based on operational needs.

- Approved time off will be coded as vacation, personal leave, or other appropriate banked time the employee has accumulated.
- **Note:** the three hour paid vaccination leave recently introduced by the Government of Alberta covers only an employee’s vaccination, and not those of dependents or family members. Refer to this question for more information.

190. I’ve been immunized against COVID-19, now what?

- Immunized healthcare workers are still required to adhere to existing PPE guidance, including continuous masking, continuous eye protection and IPC recommendations for COVID-19.
- Watch this [PPE Question of the Week video](#) for more information.
- Continue to adhere to [public health measures](#) after being immunized to help protect the small percentage of people who are still susceptible after receiving their vaccine. While the COVID-19 vaccines being delivered have shown very high effectiveness in clinical trials, no vaccines are 100 per cent protective.
- As we learn more about the duration of protection and the effectiveness current vaccines have in reducing transmission of COVID-19, it’s important for all immunized healthcare workers to continue to adhere to all PPE, IPC and public health guidance and complete the Daily Fit for Work Screening.
- Refer to information on [Daily Fit for Work Screening](#).

191. What if I meet COVID-19 exposure criteria through having close contact with COVID-19 case, or international travel after being immunized? Am I still required to quarantine?

- Healthcare workers who meet current COVID-19 exposure criteria (e.g. unprotected close contact with a COVID-19 case, return to Alberta from international travel) are still required to quarantine. Immunization does not change quarantine requirements.

192. Should I leave a gap between getting the flu and COVID-19 vaccines?

- Everyone should get immunized against influenza each year. Having both illnesses at once can be dangerous.
- We recommend individuals wait at least 28 days after the administration of two-dose COVID-19 vaccine to get another vaccine, including the flu shot.
- We also recommend waiting for a period of at least 14 days after the administration of another vaccine, including the flu shot, before getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

193. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am pregnant?

- Refer to [AHS’ Position Statement on Pregnant Healthcare Workers and COVID-19](#) for general guidance.
- The safety and efficacy of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women has not yet been established.
- At this time, there is an absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in pregnant individuals. These groups were not included in large enough numbers in the initial trials to provide solid information.
- COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to individuals in the eligible group who are pregnant if a risk assessment with their primary healthcare provider or obstetrician determines that the benefits outweigh the potential risks for woman and fetus.
- However, the individual may also be immunized without consulting their primary healthcare provider or obstetrician following their acknowledgment of the absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in this population.
- It would be prudent to delay pregnancy by 28 days or more after the administration of the complete two dose vaccine series of an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.
- Refer to the following resources for more information:
  - [COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A for Healthcare Practitioners (AH)](#)
  - [Community Physicians FAQ](#)
  - [Alberta COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy Factsheet for Practitioners](#)

194. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am breastfeeding?

- It is unknown whether Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccines are excreted in human milk. A risk to the newborns/infants cannot be excluded.

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• At this time, there is an absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in breastfeeding individuals. These groups were not included in large enough numbers in the initial trials to provide solid information.
• COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to individuals in the eligible group who are breastfeeding if a risk assessment with their primary healthcare provider or medical specialist determines that the benefits outweigh the potential risks for the mother and infant.
• However, the individual may also be immunized without consulting their primary healthcare provider or medical specialist following their acknowledgment of the absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in this population.
• Refer to the following resources for more information:
  o COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A for Healthcare Practitioners (AH)
  o Community Physicians FAQ

195. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I am immunocompromised or have an auto-immune disorder?
• At this time, there is an absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in immunocompromised individuals and those with auto-immune disorders. These groups were not included in large enough numbers in the initial trials to provide solid information.
• COVID-19 vaccine may be offered to individuals in the eligible group who are immunosuppressed due to disease or treatment and those with an auto-immune disorder if a risk assessment with their primary healthcare provider or medical specialist determines that the benefits outweigh the potential risks. Risks would include that:
  o Immunocompromised persons may have a diminished immune response to the vaccine, and
  o There is a theoretical concern that mRNA vaccine may elicit an inflammatory response and possibly exacerbate existing autoimmune diseases. However, current applications of mRNA technology for COVID-19 vaccines have been optimized to reduce this risk.
• However, with the exception of solid organ transplant (SOT) and hematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT) clients, the individual may also be immunized without consulting their primary healthcare provider or medical specialist following their acknowledgment of the risks mentioned above and the absence of evidence on the use of COVID-19 vaccine in these populations.
• Refer to the following resources for more information:
  o COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A for Healthcare Practitioners (AH)
  o Community Physicians FAQ

196. Who should NOT receive the COVID-19 vaccine?
• The vaccine may not be given to those who have previously had a serious allergic reaction to any of the vaccine ingredients.
• It is also recommended that the COVID-19 vaccine not be given within 2 weeks of having received a different vaccine.
• In order to protect the health and safety of staff and public, anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or who are required to isolate/quarantine, should not attend an immunization appointment and should rebook for a later date.
• Refer to the following resources for more information:
  o COVID-19 Vaccine Q&A for Healthcare Practitioners (AH)
  o Community Physicians FAQ

197. What happens to staff who were immunized in Alberta and become ill?
• As with all vaccines, there’s a chance that there will be side effects. Side effects include pain at the injection site and redness and swelling at the injection site.
• These local side effects are usually mild or moderate and resolve within a few days of vaccination.
• Systemic side effects include fatigue, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills, and fever.
• These systemic side effects are usually mild or moderate and resolve within a few days of vaccination.
• Since these systemic side effects are similar to symptoms of COVID-19, healthcare workers should be directed to follow existing immunization after-care guidance.

198. How is AHS tracking COVID-19 immunization in healthcare workers?
- We are asking staff to complete the COVID-19 immunization reporting form that is available on Insite after your second dose. This information will be used or disclosed to appropriately plan, manage and allocate resources in the event of an outbreak to protect patients, families and healthcare workers. Your health information is collected under the authority of sections 20(b), 21(1)(a), and 27(1) and (2) of the Health Information Act (“HIA”).

199. How is AHS managing vaccine wastage?
- While current waste levels of COVID-19 vaccine are extremely low, AHS has implemented a provincial waste mitigation strategy to ensure we continue to roll out COVID-19 vaccines efficiently, while minimizing the number of COVID-19 vaccine doses that are unused.
- AHS uses an evolving list of eligible individuals, consistent with current sequencing, who can be offered immunization.

200. Have there been any adverse events following immunization with the COVID-19 vaccine?
- Refer to Alberta Health for the most up-to-date figures on adverse events following immunization (AEFI) that have been reported to Alberta Health and AHS.
- Healthcare providers play a crucial role in monitoring vaccine safety and are obligated to report adverse effects that may be linked to immunization. Report adverse events to the AHS Provincial AEFI Team.